

STORY OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

NORTHERN TERRITORY 2021



Acknowledgements

In the spirit of respect, the authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country and recognise their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to elders past and present.

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The data platform is available at cmc.nt.gov.au.

Disclaimer

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Cover photos: The cover celebrates the rich cultural make-up of the Northern Territory with photos of children and young people from across the regions.

Message from the Minister for Children



This year's Story is the second edition, continuing our commitment to ensure the progress of our children and young people can be tracked, and providing a vehicle for local stories to be told.

Feedback from the first edition showed how important it is to the community to have locally relevant information in decision making. Although some of the data is sobering, it is clear that there is important work happening, and strong Territorians working hard to improve the lives of our children and young people. The Story provides an opportunity to tell these stories of positive change. My Government is committed to building on this good work and walking alongside the community to support our children and young people.

We need to have an honest and objective view of what is happening in the lives of Territorians, from birth to young adulthood, to inform our work and strengthen our commitments.

I thank Menzies School of Health Research and the Editorial Committee for their important work on this publication.



Minister for Children,
the Honourable Lauren Moss MLA



Foreword

I am pleased to present you with this second edition of the biennial publication *Story of Our Children and Young People*. It tells some of the many stories of the wellbeing of our children and young people.

Relationships are important. Central to our lives are the relationships with others, our community, the natural world and, for some, the spiritual world. When relationships are caring, safe and inclusive, children and young people feel valued, loved and safe, they have a positive sense of identity and culture, and are able to participate, learn and thrive. The *Story of Our Children and Young People* reflects this interconnected nature through its use of Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY's) the Nest framework, along with a locally designed Aboriginal Framework.

The theme for National Children's Week this year is 'Children have the right to choose their own friends and safely connect with others'. It speaks into the importance of children and young people being free to build positive friendships and to join groups and organisations of their choosing. Beyond family relationships, it is important for children and young people to build healthy and safe peer relationships and to explore their interests.

Understanding and exploration of our cultural connections and stories of wellness is a key part of relationship. This year NAIDOC focused on healing country in its theme. Country is more than a place – it is inherent to our identity, culture and wellbeing. A person is connected to the land and the land to them. It is a foundational relationship. Our country and our world needs healing and we all have a role to play. The wellbeing stories of our children and young people are part of the stories of country, healing and relationship.

For our community to thrive, our children and young people need to be thriving. In these pages, we lay a foundation for understanding – an evidence base – to support policy, planning and practice. We have sought to demonstrate positive stories of change and cultural stories of wellness alongside the data measures, which often tell a challenging story.

I commend this second *Story of Our Children and Young People* to you and urge you to use it to inform your ongoing efforts to support the wellbeing of children and young people across the Northern Territory.



A blue ink handwritten signature, appearing to read 'Peter Pangquee', written in a cursive style.

Peter Pangquee, BM
Chairperson
Editorial Committee



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Executive Summary

This is the second publication of the biennial Story of Our Children and Young People (the Story). The Story addresses the demand for an evidence-base to inform actions to improve outcomes for the children and young people of the Northern Territory.

The Story is underpinned by the national research of ARACY and the Nest outcomes framework for children and young people, which aligns with the Story's Aboriginal Framework, developed in 2019.

This 2021 Story builds on the 2019 edition. The data gaps identified in 2019 have been explored, with data sourced for a number of measures which contribute to addressing the gaps. There have been changes to the policy environment since the 2019 Story including revision of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. There has also been the disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic including its implications to service delivery. The data measures and case studies in this Story have been considered in the context of this changing policy environment, with the addition of further data measures.

There are 58 indicators, 18 case studies and four cultural stories of wellness used to tell the 2021 Story across the Northern Territory and its six regions. Context is provided, when available, by including comparative Australian data. Data is presented for all children and/or young people for all measures.

When comparing the data in this 2021 Story with the 2019 Story, a number of measures suggest change. However, caution is required when making comparison over a short period and using only two data points. Trend data using multiple data points provides a more reliable assessment of change. A selection of 13 key measures across the six domains are presented with trend data, and the addition of six data focus stories detail information available from local surveys. Updates are provided for many of the case studies featured in the 2019 Story.

The most significant addition to the Story is the development of an online data platform to complement the data available in the Story. The platform enables users to access data which can be disaggregated by Aboriginal status and by sub-region. Additional trend data has also been included to facilitate a deeper understanding of changes over time.

While the data highlight many stories, the Story includes a simple and direct approach in the presentation of measures, with a factual narrative which provides context and description of the results but deliberately refrains from providing interpretation or opinion.





Introduction

PREAMBLE

Children and young people are our future. They are also central to our community today. When their lives are flourishing our community benefits.

For our children and young people to truly flourish and reach their potential, there are basic human needs which must be met. Children and young people need to be valued, loved and safe within their families, educational centres, workplaces and in the broader community. They need to be healthy in mind, body and spirit, and they need opportunities to learn. They also require access to basic material needs and to have opportunities to participate with their family, peers, interest groups and in the community. Underpinning these needs is the requirement for our children and young people to have a positive sense of their identity and culture. When these basic wellbeing needs are not met, our children and young people suffer.

There is growing application of an evidence-based and outcomes-focused approach to supporting children and young people, and their families. Working from an evidence-base ensures actions are grounded in sound information and practice. When we work with an outcomes-focus we shift our attention beyond the systems and facilities of support and focus on the child or young person themselves. In a fast-changing social environment it is vital our support systems are relevant and reliable as well as flexible.

The Story of Our Children and Young People (the Story) addresses the demand for an evidence-base to inform actions to improve outcomes for our children and young people. It is a tool for all levels of government, non-government organisations and regional and community leaders to inform and guide policy, planning, decision-making and practice. The Story is also a resource for the wider community supporting our children and young people, to provide deeper understanding about the key indicators of wellbeing and where attention is required.

Published biennially, this Story is one of a series which aims to track progress over time, across data measures and via case studies. Key data measures, mapped against six domains, measure wellbeing from the antenatal period to young adulthood. A feature of the Story is the presentation of

information for Northern Territory regions as well as the Northern Territory as a whole. Case studies demonstrate positive change for children and young people. A growing focus on evaluated initiatives contributes towards practice-based evidence.

In this Story we build on the 2019 edition. Identified data gaps have been explored, the changing policy environment considered, regional boundaries assessed, case study selection criteria strengthened and regional stories developed to include sub-regional data. The most significant addition to the Story is the development of an online data platform with additional data for sub-regions, by Aboriginal status and with selected trend data.

There are three sections to this Story:

- The first section describes the development of this Story, its framework and approach. It also includes an overview of the people of the Northern Territory and its six regions.
- In the second section the six domain chapters, the core of the Story, report how our children and young people are faring using indicators of wellbeing and case studies of positive change.
- The final section concludes the Story with a description of next steps, identified data gaps, references, glossary and lists of measures and case studies.

BACKGROUND

The idea for the Story emerged in 2017 during the consultation phase for Starting Early for a Better Future, the Northern Territory Government's early childhood development strategy. During consultations there was a clear demand for comprehensive information about child and youth wellbeing, with non-government organisations and community members wanting access to locally relevant data to support local decisions.

The Northern Territory Government committed to a biennial State of the Children report, as it was initially known, as a key action in Starting Early for a Better Future, in April 2018.

The first edition of the Story was released in November 2019. The 2019 Story was developed and written by Menzies School of Health Research in partnership with the Northern Territory Government and under the guidance of an

independent Editorial Committee. The Editorial Committee provided information, guidance and made decisions in the development of the structure and content for the 2019 Story. There was ongoing targeted consultation throughout the development of the 2019 Story, which included the testing of the Aboriginal Framework.

This second edition of the Story has been developed under the same governance structure with a mix of continuing and new members of the Editorial Committee. The membership of the Editorial Committee is detailed in Appendix III.

Response to the 2019 Story

Feedback was sought, both formally and informally, from users of the 2019 Story. In late 2020, users were asked to complete a short survey on their use of the Story. Respondents to the survey were split evenly between government and community sectors and across Northern Territory regions. Respondents worked in various areas including with children, youth and young adults, and from education, health, community development, housing and justice sectors.

Respondents reported a range of benefits of the Story: regional data, data across multiple areas of wellbeing, collation of relevant indicators for the Northern Territory, regional stories, Northern Territory data, access to data tables, case studies of things going well, cultural stories of wellness and the Aboriginal Framework. For those who had used the Story in their work, they did so as a reference tool, a regional and Northern Territory data source and for staff induction. A smaller number of people had used the Story in community planning, individual service planning and when writing grant applications.

When asked how the Story could develop, respondents suggested: data disaggregated by Aboriginal status, more localised data to support place-based change, more positive stories, and a link to Closing the Gap. Respondents also provided ideas for additional measures of wellbeing to be considered for the next Story.

DEVELOPMENTS TO THE STORY

There are a number of ways in which this 2021 Story has progressed from the 2019 publication. These developments are based on feedback from users and through discussions within the Editorial Committee.

Regional boundaries

In 2021, the Northern Territory Government revised its regional boundaries to create a sixth region, known as Darwin, Palmerston and Litchfield (referred to as Greater Darwin in the Story). The regional boundaries used in this Story are based on the revised boundaries and have resulted in minor changes to some of the data reported in the 2019 Story.

Data gaps

There were 26 measures identified in 2019 where no data source was available. These gaps were considered in the development of this Story, with data sourced for 11 measures including young people in detention, mental health related hospitalisations and sexually transmissible infection rates. In some cases, data is available for the Northern Territory but not for regions. For other measures, there is no reliable data available. The updated list of identified data gaps is available at Appendix II.

While there is some development to address data gaps, there remains a continuing shortfall in measures of the wellbeing of young people in the domain of identity and culture. Of particular relevance in the Northern Territory is connection to Aboriginal culture and Aboriginal spirituality. The Editorial Committee has considered this in the development of this Story and two measures reporting on Aboriginal culture in the workplace have been added to this domain, as well as further data on Aboriginal languages spoken in the Northern Territory.

Data focus areas

There are some data gaps for which there is information available from local surveys. The results from some of these collections are included in this Story in the new format of a data focus. The six data focus areas provide information collected in an area of priority, however limitations in the sample of respondents means the results may not be representative of a wider population.

Call for community level data

There is a growing call for the availability of community level data to support place-based planning and decision-making. This was a strong message from both the formal and informal feedback received following the 2019 Story. In the development of the Story, the Editorial Committee considered the availability and reliability of community level data. Given the complexities in the underlying datasets used in the Story, the movement of people between communities, the sensitivities of many measures and the challenges with seeking permissions for release of community level data, it was decided by the Editorial Committee that inclusion of community level data was beyond the scope of the Story.

Building on the data

There have been a number of developments in the data measures, with 16 new measures presented in this Story, a number of those meeting identified data gaps as discussed earlier. There has also been adjustment to how some measures are reported to maintain consistency with national reporting. A selection of 13 measures across the six domains are now presented with trend data. For some of these data there are 10 data points while for Australian Bureau of Statistics census data, measures

are reported for the three most recent censuses. Information on trend data, new or varied measures are detailed in the introduction of each domain chapter. Further technical commentary on the data is detailed in Appendix I.

Online data platform

An online data platform has been created to strengthen and complement the data available in the Story. The platform will enable users to access more detailed data across the measures including disaggregation by Aboriginal status and by sub-region. Additional trend data has also been included to facilitate a deeper understanding of changes across time. Users are able to prepare and download data tables and graphs to meet their individual needs. The data platform is found at cmc.nt.gov.au.

Case studies and cultural stories of wellness

Case studies demonstrating positive change and cultural stories of wellness sit alongside the data measures to enrich our understanding of the lives of children and young people. Case studies highlight the work happening within communities to support positive outcomes for children and young people. They provide insight into areas that may not be easily measured, and for which formal research or evaluation may not be available. Cultural stories of wellness highlight the cultural diversity which shapes family practice and influences the emerging identity of children and young people. There are 18 case studies and four cultural stories in this Story.

Evaluation and monitoring are important for assessing effectiveness and progress. The importance of evaluation was recognised in the preparation of this Story and the selection criteria for case studies was developed to give preference to evaluated programs. Four of the case studies included in this Story have been evaluated, either internally or externally. See details in the list of case studies on page 148. In addition, the success of a program is often reliant on local acceptance and engagement. The Editorial Committee recognised the importance of local perceptions of effectiveness and adapted the selection criteria to incorporate the level of community acceptance and valuing.

While case studies which had been evaluated were given preference, there is also a risk that being too prescriptive may exclude valuable examples of positive change. As a result, an additional criteria was the collection of a diverse range of local stories from across the Territory that highlight positive change and improved outcomes for children and young people.

Feedback from the 2019 Story demonstrated how much users valued the positive stories of change. For the 2021 Story, updates are given on many of the stories featured in the 2019 edition.

CHANGES TO THE POLICY ENVIRONMENT

There have been changes to the policy environment since the 2019 Story, including revision of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, implementation of the Northern Territory Government Social Outcomes Framework and a number of other local and national framework developments. There has also been the disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic including its implications to service delivery. The data measures in this Story have been considered in the context of this changing policy environment.

Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap underwent a consultation and redevelopment phase in 2019. The new Agreement commits to a genuine partnership between all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work together to close the gap. Fourteen working groups have formed in the Northern Territory, supported by the Northern Territory Government, to progress the work in meeting the Agreement targets.

The four priority reforms are: formal partnerships and shared decision-making, building the community-controlled sector, transforming government organisations and shared access to data and information at regional level.⁽¹⁾

The 2020 Closing the Gap report showed that while two of the targets were on track for Australia as a whole, early education and Year 12 attainment, there has been little progress across other indicators. The target to have 95 per cent Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood by 2025 was on track for all jurisdictions except the Northern Territory.⁽²⁾

The preparation of the 2021 Story included a review of the indicators of the new Closing the Gap Agreement and consequent realignment of a number of measures. In addition, many measures are now available by Aboriginal status on the online data platform.

 denotes the measure is in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework

The Northern Territory Government released the Social Outcomes Framework (the Framework) in May 2021 to provide a whole of government approach to measuring progress against key social outcomes for all Territorians.⁽³⁾ The Framework was developed with government and community sector consultation and comprises seven domains which include measures of wellbeing across all areas of life for all ages. The preparation of the 2021 Story included a review of the indicators proposed for the Framework and subsequent inclusion of additional measures.

 denotes the measure is in the Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework.

National frameworks

Nationally, there is a range of other work being done to track outcomes for children and young people. The Social Progress Index, the work of Amplify Social Impact by the Centre for Social Impact, was reviewed for measures to be included in the Story.⁽⁴⁾ The draft Stronger Places, Stronger People framework developed by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services was reviewed, as well as reporting from the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing.⁽⁵⁾

COVID-19

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic had an unprecedented effect on the community in the Northern Territory and around the world. There have been significant changes in the way the community lives. How this will impact children and young people's trajectory in life remains unknown. Emerging data shows the Northern Territory's population has increased and people are less likely to consider leaving the Territory. This has been particularly evident for young people aged 18-29.⁽⁶⁾

In the Northern Territory, regional travel restrictions disrupted service delivery to remote areas for an extended period in 2020, when biosecurity zones were in place. As these biosecurity zones were lifted, services were reassessed, with varied response plans adopted by service providers across Northern Territory regions. In 2021, service delivery was impacted to a lesser extent, with short term lockdowns and travel restrictions imposed. Children and young people were able to attend school in person for most of 2020-21 however, for some, a shift to online and home-based learning has presented a major change in the learning environment. Case studies in this Story highlight some of the impacts to services during this time.

Much of the data presented in this Story precedes the pandemic. Where data is reported for the 2020 calendar year in the learning domain, and for the 2020-21 financial year in the valued, loved and safe domain, there may have been influences from the impact of transport and movement restrictions, however these have not been specifically analysed.

THE NEST FRAMEWORK

The Story is underpinned by the national research of ARACY and its development of the Nest outcomes framework for children and young people.⁽⁷⁾

The Nest is a theoretical framework with one practical application being ARACY's Common Approach; a child-centred, and strengths-based way of talking about wellbeing.

ARACY's Common Approach Wellbeing Wheel (Figure 1) places the child at the centre, surrounded by circles of influence from family to community. A child is first a member of a family, then a community and then the wider society, all having an impact on a child's development. The most crucial relationships for child development are those within the child's immediate surroundings – within the family, with caregivers or guardians.

Through ARACY's research, which included the voice of children and young people, it was determined that for children and young people to thrive, they need to:

- be valued, loved and safe
- have material basics
- be healthy
- be learning
- be participating
- have a positive sense of identity and culture.

Each of these six domains are intrinsically linked. This is consistent with values demonstrated throughout Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. A child will struggle to engage in learning, for example, without a strong sense of being valued, loved and safe. A young person cannot be healthy, without a strong sense of identity and culture. Everything is interconnected. It is one story.



Based on their ongoing consultation and research, ARACY continues to update the Nest. What was previously the 'loved and safe' domain has been amended to include 'valued' and renamed 'valued, loved and safe'. This change is to better capture the ways in which children and young people need to feel appreciated, seen and cared for in their community. Whilst 'valued' has always been a strong element of the domain it was originally omitted from the title to keep it succinct. The 2021 Story has been updated to reflect this change. Additionally the concept of 'safe' has been expanded to incorporate children and young people feeling safe regarding their future, in particular protection of the natural environment and climate.⁽⁸⁾

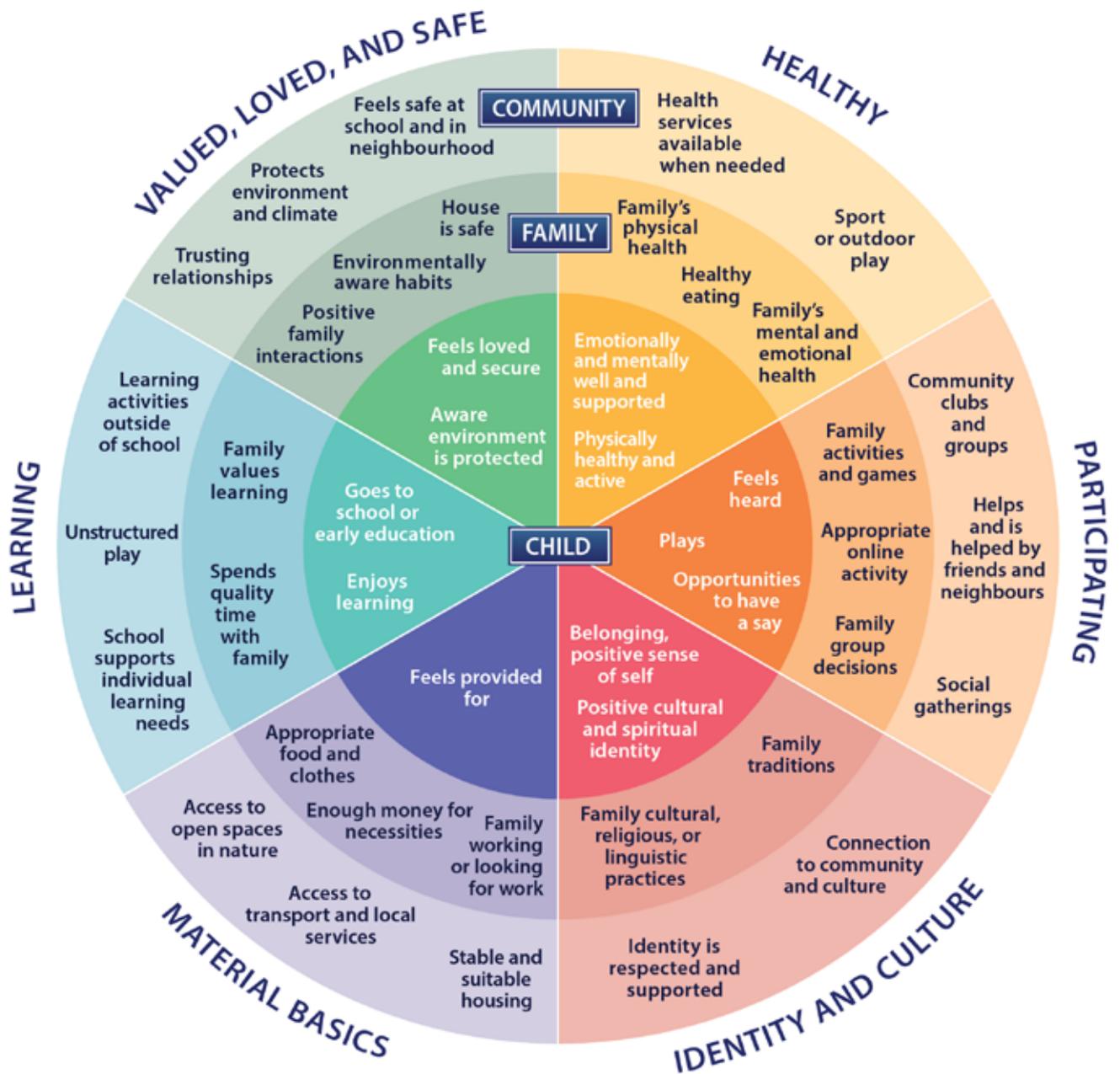


Figure 1: ARACY's Wellbeing Wheel for Children, a Common Approach® resource.
 Source: Copyright ARACY 2021. The Common Approach® and The Common Approach Training® are registered trademarks of ARACY. Common Approach® resources may only be used following official Common Approach Training®. Please visit www.aracy.org.au for training details. Reproduced with permission.

Recent frameworks such as the Nest echo the much older and holistic nature of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. While this Story is underpinned by the national research of ARACY, it acknowledges the ancient authority and traditions of Aboriginal people by using a locally developed framework (see Figure 2 on the next page) which applies cultural metaphors.

ABORIGINAL FRAMEWORK

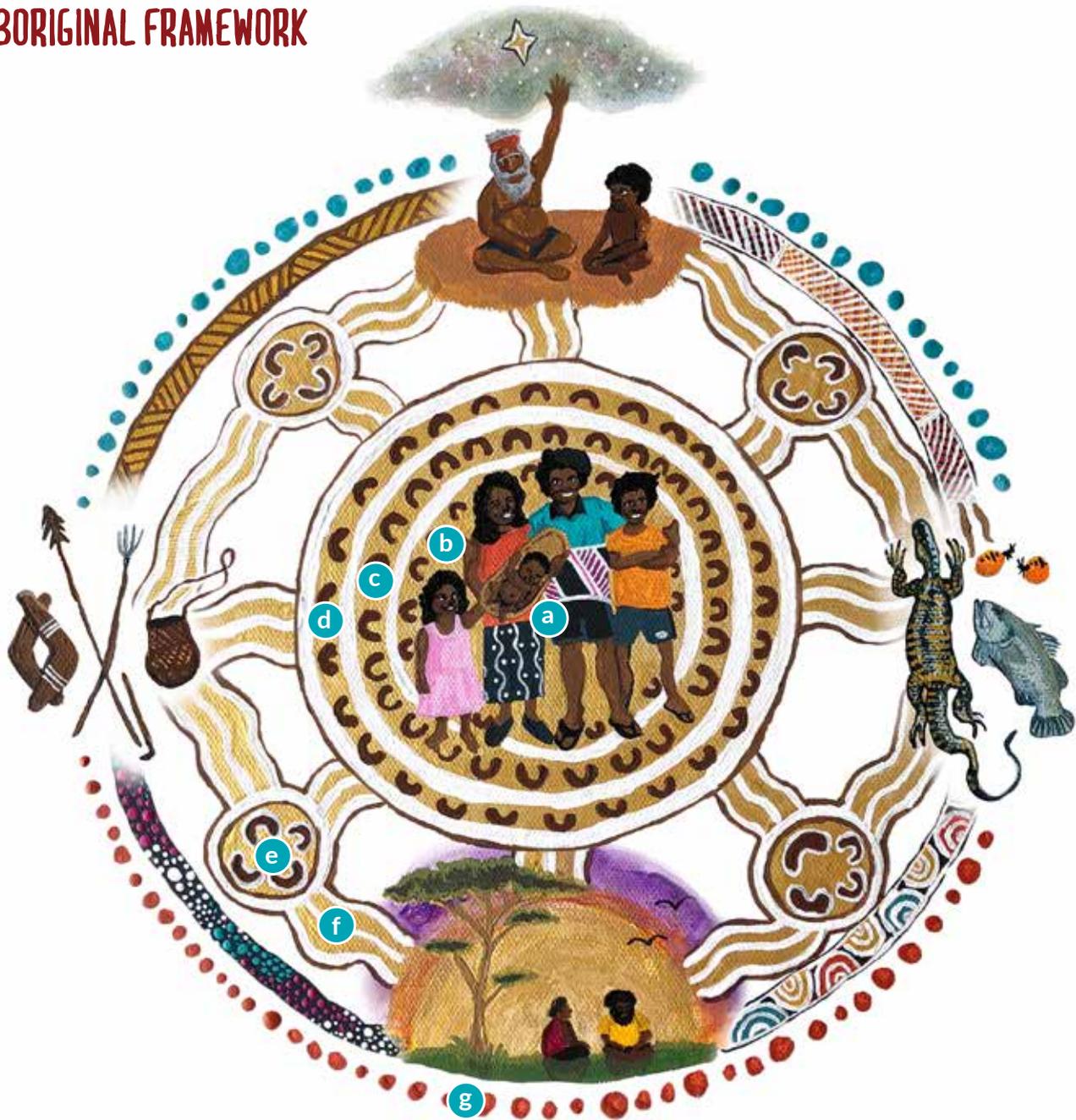


Figure 2: Aboriginal Framework. Source: Developed by a cultural reference group of the Editorial Committee and modified through conversations with Aboriginal people from across the Northern Territory. Painted by Cian McCue.

- a** Child or young person in the centre, with their family
- b** Children and young people form the inner circle
- c** They are surrounded by a second circle of parents, uncles, aunties and those within the family across that generation. This circle also includes local service providers such as schools and clinics, and other people working with families
- d** The third circle represents grandparents, elders and those within the family across that generation. It also includes cultural authority groups, government, policy makers and decision makers
- e** Around the circles of people, are four groups of people talking and working together
- f** Everything is connected by travel lines which illustrate movement and flow, as everything co-exists. The movement is in all directions as people have responsibilities to each other. Through the kinship system, everything and everyone is connected including to the sun, moon, stars and universe. It is important for everyone to be working together and communicating with each other
- g** The dots around the outside hold the framework together, demonstrating a wholeness. The dots also allow for movement in and out of the framework.

The Editorial Committee reviewed the Aboriginal Framework used in the 2019 Story, to consider if it could be refined. Aboriginal members of the Editorial Committee were keen to develop the accessibility of the framework to saltwater people, given much of the symbolism is from the desert regions. Consideration was given to a number of ideas and a decision made to replace the ochre dots around the upper half of the framework with blue dots to depict the waters of the northern parts of the Territory, with the ochre dots around the bottom half of the framework depicting the desert.

METAPHORS AND THE NEST DOMAINS

Significant elements of Aboriginal cultures are highlighted in the Aboriginal Framework. These cultural stories or metaphors were chosen to represent some of the many stories from across the Territory, taking into consideration the differing ways of life, and looking for commonality and shared understanding. They provide insights into Aboriginal life and cultural practices to promote wellness for children, young people, families and communities. These stories can be related to the many other cultural and family traditions present in our community.

The metaphors used for the Aboriginal Framework were selected to be readily interpreted using the six domains of the Nest. These six areas of wellbeing for children and young people are the pillars around which this Story is written.

Being valued, loved and safe

Coolamon

It is important for children and young people to grow up in a loving and safe environment. The coolamon is a large bowl-like carrier made from the wood of a tree. It is also known by other names, such as Guluman in the Ngukurr region and Nanhthi we in the Wadeye region. It is a traditional cot and keeps babies safe, strong and healthy. The baby in the coolamon is surrounded by other children, adults and wider family. It is safe, valued, loved and cared for by all generations.



Being healthy

Hunting and gathering

It is important for children and young people to have their health needs met. Connection to land and culture through hunting and gathering ensures a healthy lifestyle – physically, developmentally and mentally. Plants and animals provide important food sources to maintain a healthy diet. For example, goannas are hunted for their meat, as well as the fat and intestines used for medicine. It is about sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle, providing good nutrition and health for yourself and your family.

Having material basics

Tree

It is important for children and young people to have access to the material basics in life such as housing, food, clean water, sanitary systems and transport. Trees can provide essential items such as wood and bark for housing and to build canoes for travel. They are also used to make tools for hunting and personal safety such as spears and boomerangs. Trees are a source of bush food and medicine. They also bring family and community together, gathering under trees for shade, meetings and other purposes.



Learning

Oral tradition

It is important for children and young people to be learning throughout their lives. There is a strong oral tradition in Aboriginal culture, as well as other cultures present in the Territory. Elders and grandparents sit with children and young people to pass on knowledge. Key principles and ideas are taught over time and are passed down from one generation to another. Learning happens in all elements of life, including learning about language, law, cultural knowledge and practices, family relationships and history.



It is important for children and young people to be actively participating, among their peers and within the community. Spears, boomerangs and dilly bags represent active participation in Aboriginal community life. Spears are used for hunting and fishing and in competitive leisure activities, a dilly bag is used to gather seeds and fruit, boomerangs are used for hunting and as clapping sticks in music and dance.

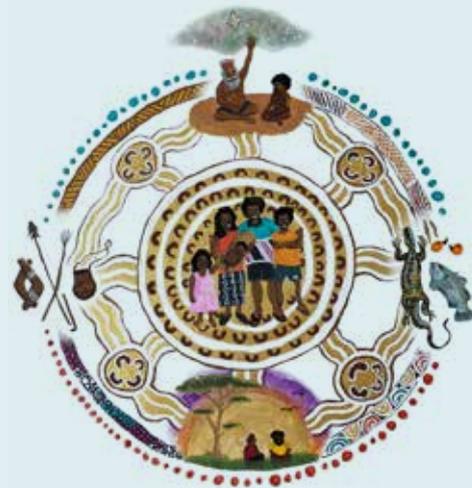
Participating

Spear, boomerang and dilly bag

Positive sense of identity and culture

Kinship system

It is important for children and young people to have a positive understanding of their human identity and culture. Everything in Aboriginal life is connected to and given its place in the kinship system. It is about the whole universe, the planets, stars, moon and sun – everything is connected. When this system breaks down or when something is missing, there is disconnection and dysfunction. Elders across many cultures present in the Territory are passing on cultural knowledge to younger generations.



STRUCTURE OF THE STORY

There are 58 indicators, six data focus areas, 18 case studies and four cultural stories of wellness used to tell the Story of Our Children and Young People across the Northern Territory and its six regions. Context is provided, when available, by including comparative Australian data. Data is presented for all children and/or young people for all measures.

Whilst we are separating elements of wellbeing, in life they are intrinsically linked and so there is crossover between domains. For example, access to the internet could be attributed with equal validity to a child or young person having material basics or being able to participate in education and training. Also there are elements of living within community in whatever form it takes, be it family, school, sporting clubs etc. that can be explored within the domains of

being valued, loved and safe, being healthy, learning and participating. We have attributed indicators to the domains in which they are most commonly reported.

While the data within these pages highlight many stories, the Story includes a simple and direct approach in the presentation of measures, with a factual narrative which provides context and description of the results but deliberately refrains from providing interpretation or opinion.

There are recognised limitations in the data. Much of the available data is service-based and commonly reports deficits rather than positive outcomes. This is particularly the case for health and child protection indicators. Further technical commentary on the data is detailed in Appendix I.

People of the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory covers nearly one sixth of the Australian landmass.⁽⁹⁾ It is home to about 1% of the Australian population.⁽¹⁰⁾ The majority of people living in the Northern Territory reside in Greater Darwin, with the remaining population spread across smaller towns, communities and remote outstations.

The Northern Territory Government divides the Territory into six regions (Figure 3):

- Greater Darwin
- Top End
- East Arnhem
- Big Rivers
- Barkly
- Central Australia

This chapter presents information about the people of the Northern Territory and each region to provide context for the rest of the Story. Key measures of population, language and culture, education, employment and families are presented.

The online data platform provides further information by sub-region and by Aboriginal status to extend the information available here.

Some of the information in this chapter is similar to the 2019 Story as it is also based on the ABS Census from 2016. There is however some variation in numbers, compared with the 2019 Story, as a result of the revision to regional boundaries, changes to some definitions and changes to calculation methods for some measures.

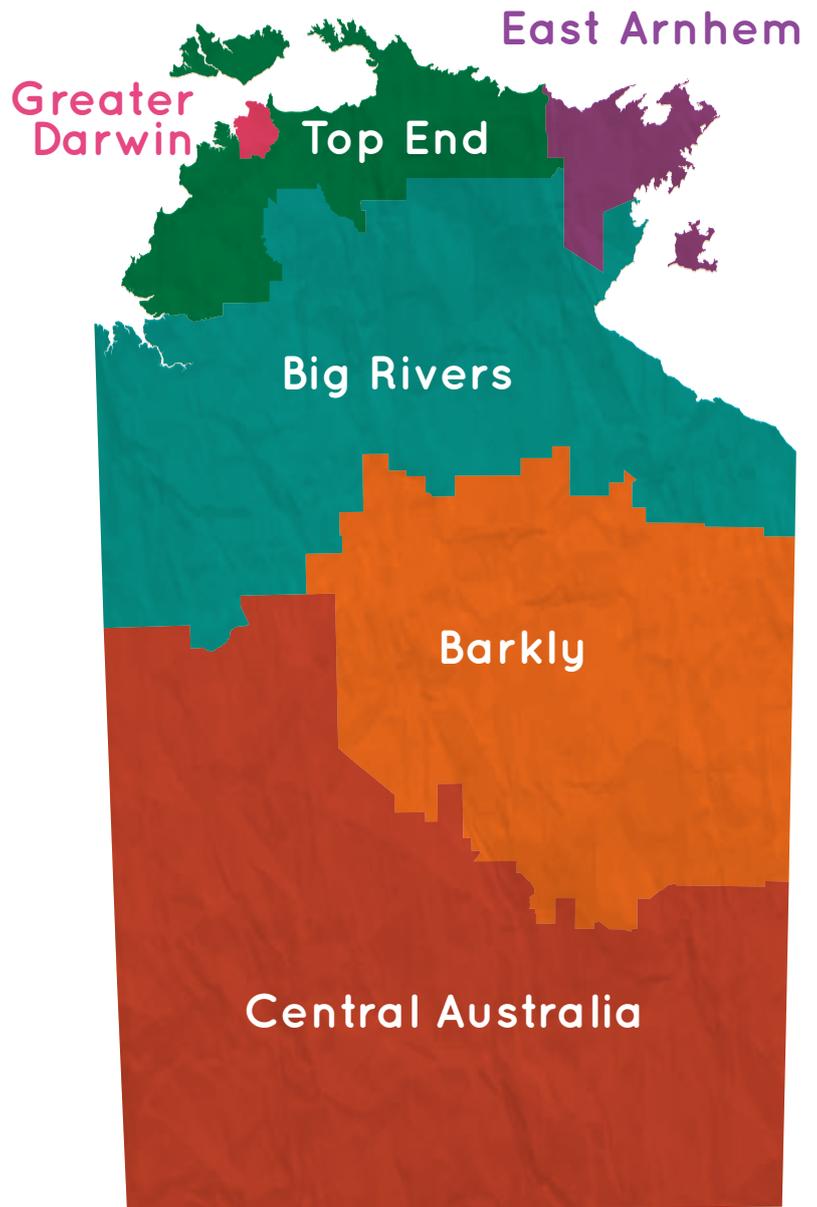


Figure 3: Regions of the Northern Territory



Northern Territory

POPULATION

The Northern Territory population has some distinctive characteristics including a young age profile and mobile population.⁽¹¹⁾ The age distribution of a population impacts priorities for funding and service delivery. The movement of people to and from the Territory, from interstate or overseas, is an important influence on the experience of Territory children. The high number of people born overseas contributes to the cultural diversity in the community. When people come from another country, they bring with them their language and culture.

Total population ^a	245,929
3 in 10 people are Aboriginal people ^b	30.3%
Almost 2 in 10 people were born overseas	19.8%
1 in 7 lived interstate five years earlier	14.0%

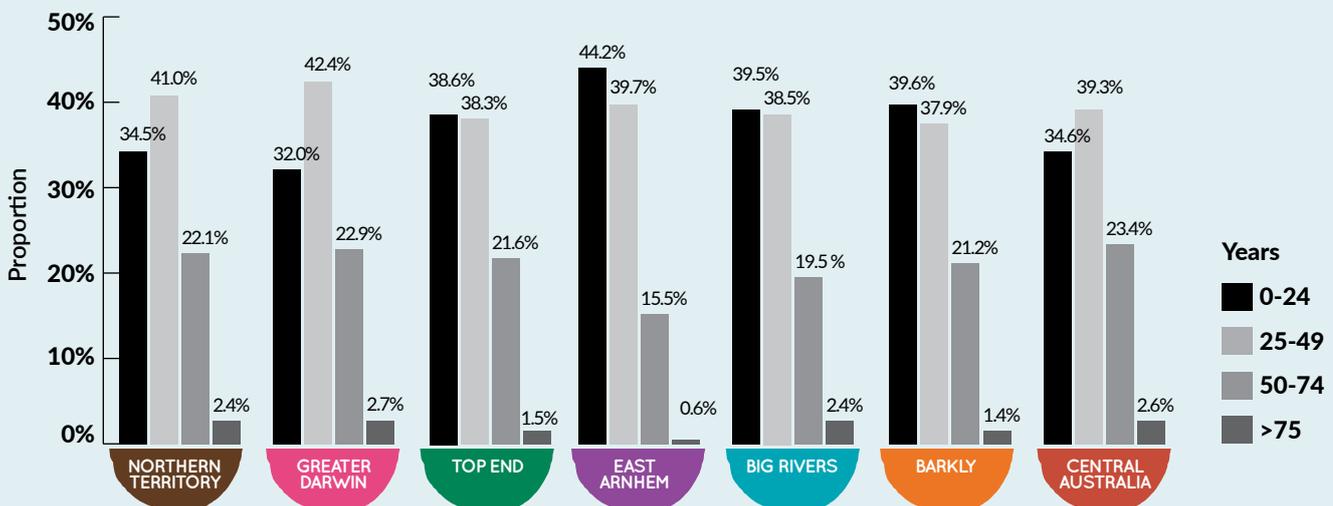
Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016; ^a ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^b ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION, BY ABORIGINAL STATUS



Data source and year: Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Northern Territory is rich in cultural diversity. This multicultural environment is significant as the majority of a child's early development occurs in the context of family relationships. The Northern Territory encompasses the traditional land of many Aboriginal nations, with more than 100 Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken.⁽¹²⁾ The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home, of all the Australian states and territories.⁽¹³⁾

58.0%

About 6 in 10 people speak only English

More than 1 in 7 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

15.3%

3 in 10 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

29.4%

EDUCATION



The education level of parents has a significant influence on their children's engagement in education and the income of a family. Understanding education levels in the broader community also provides context regarding that community's attitudes towards education.

41.0%

About 4 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level). This includes university qualifications such as a Diploma or Bachelor degree and VET qualifications such as a Certificate III or above

12.7%

For 1 in 8 people, aged 15 and over, Year 12 is their highest level of education

16.0%

For 1 in 6 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



The major employment industries in the Northern Territory are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, and construction.⁽¹⁴⁾ Employment in regional and remote areas of the Northern Territory is often characterised by limited industries and few job opportunities. Standard measures of unemployment tend to reflect job availability and may not be reflective of the Territory experience. The participation rate measures engagement in employment.

65.5%

About 2 in 3 people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

7.1%

Of those who participate in the workforce, 7 in 100 people are unemployed

FAMILIES



The key influences on a child's development come from their immediate family. Understanding the structure of the family provides context for a child's wellbeing.

22.1%

More than 2 in 10 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

79.4%

Of single parent families, 8 in 10 have a female as the head of the family

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



Northern Territory Continued

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	18,073
5-9 years	18,078
10-14 years	16,680
15-19 years	15,148
20-24 years	16,759
Total	84,738

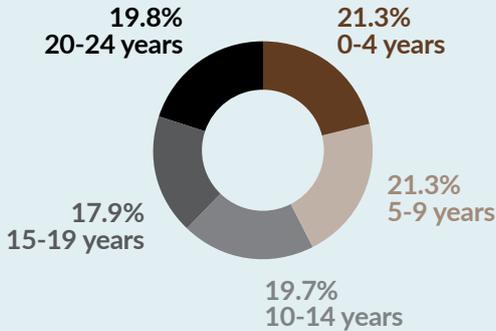
34.5%

The Northern Territory has a young population with about 1 in 3 people aged 0-24

41.2%

More than 4 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).







Greater Darwin

The Greater Darwin region includes the City of Darwin, the City of Palmerston and Litchfield Shire. This region is home to the majority of the Northern Territory's population and has the highest population density of the six Northern Territory regions.

The Larrakia people are the traditional owners of the Greater Darwin area and have a strong cultural influence in the region and through celebrations such as NAIDOC week. The region is multicultural with one quarter of people born overseas. Cultural celebrations are numerous and include the Harmony Day Soiree, World Music Festival, as well as Chinese, Filipino, Greek, Indian, Indonesian, Italian, Nepalese and Thai festivals among many others.

The region hosts popular arts and music, sporting, car and bike, rodeo and horse-racing events. There is the annual Royal Darwin and Freds Pass Rural shows, and regular community markets throughout Darwin and Palmerston, as well as Coolalinga and Berry Springs.

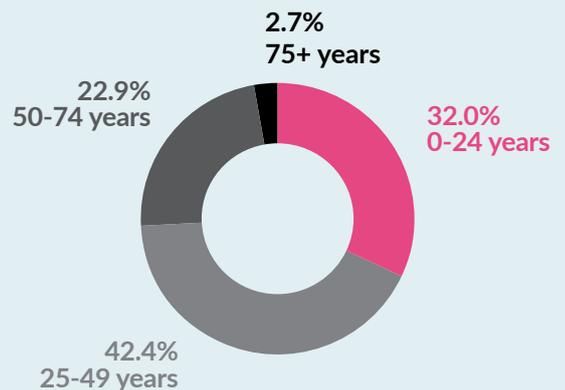


POPULATION

Total population	147,255
About 1 in 10 people are Aboriginal people ^a	11.9%
About 1 in 4 people were born overseas ^b	25.6%
1 in 6 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	16.2%

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



FAMILIES

18.4%

Almost 1 in 5 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

76.9%

Of single parent families, almost 4 in 5 have a female as the head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

67.9%

About 7 in 10 people speak only English

<1%

Less than 1 in 100 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

20.3%

2 in 10 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



47.2%

Almost 1 in 2 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level)

14.2%

For 1 in 7 people, aged 15 and over, Year 12 is their highest level of education

14.1%

For 1 in 7 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



73.2%

About 7 in 10 people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

4.6%

Of those who participate in the workforce, almost 5 in 100 people are unemployed

The major employment industries are public administration and safety, construction, and health care and social assistance.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



32%

About 1 in 3 people are aged 0-24

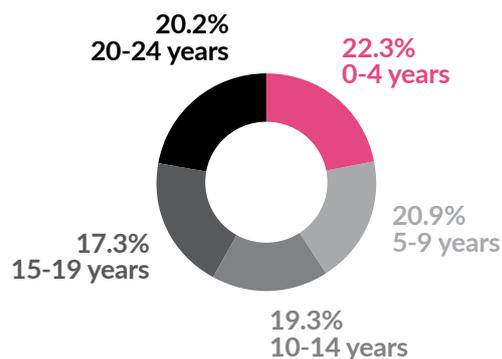
17.7%

Almost 1 in 5 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	10,503
5-9 years	9,840
10-14 years	9,103
15-19 years	8,146
20-24 years	9,510
Total	47,102

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).



Top End

The Top End region covers north and north-west sections of the Territory, including the Tiwi Islands. There are six townships in the region, including Batchelor, Jabiru and Adelaide River, with 17 communities, four town camps and 138 outstations.

The Top End has a strong Aboriginal culture. From the saltwater to river, plain and escarpment country, local communities work with the uniqueness of their land. There are regular community events throughout the region, from smaller local occasions to larger events which are important for locals and also attract visitors. Such events include the Taste of Kakadu Festival, the Mahbilil Festival Jabiru, the Tiwi Islands Grand Final and Art Sale and NAIDOC Day.

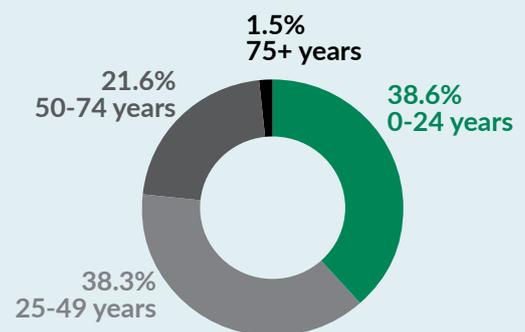


The region is home to numerous art and culture centres including Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya, Bawinanga's Maningrida Arts and Culture, Bábbarra Women's Centre, Merrepen Arts in Nauiyu, Marrawuddi Gallery in Jabiru, and Munupi, Tiwi Designs and Jilamara art centres of the Tiwi Islands.

POPULATION

Total population	17,231
3 in 4 people are Aboriginal ^a	75.4%
About 5 in 100 people were born overseas ^b	5.3%
About 5 in 100 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	5.4%

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

FAMILIES



28.4%

Almost 3 in 10 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

82.7%

Of single parent families, about 8 in 10 have a female as head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

27.8%

About 3 in 10 people speak only English

56.0%

More than half of people speak an Aboriginal language at home

59.2%

6 in 10 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



17.9%

Almost 2 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification

10.4%

About 1 in 10 people, aged over 15, have completed Year 12 as their highest year of education

27.9%

For almost 3 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent is their highest year of education

EMPLOYMENT



43.3%

More than 4 in 10 people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

22.4%

Of those who participate in the workforce, about 1 in 5 are unemployed

The major employment industries are education and training, public administration and safety, and health care and social assistance.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



38.6%

Almost 4 in 10 people are aged 0-24

85.9%

More than 8 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years 1,152

5-9 years 1,536

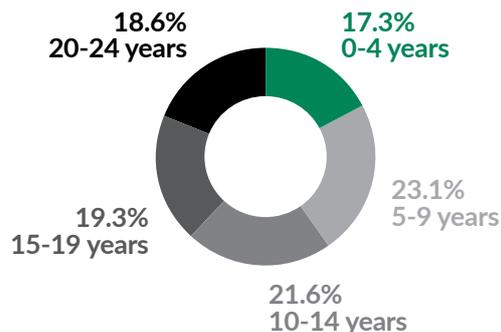
10-14 years 1,436

15-19 years 1,281

20-24 years 1,238

Total 6,645

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).



East Arnhem

The region of East Arnhem covers the north-east corner of the Northern Territory. The major centre is Nhulunbuy. There are 10 other communities and over 70 outstations.

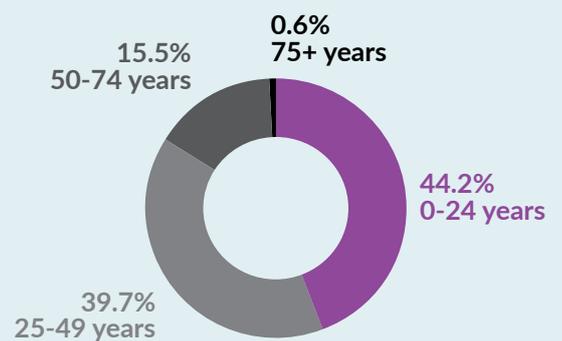
Yolŋu and Anindilyakwa families have a deep connection with their land and seas, and are actively engaged in culture through ceremony. The annual Garma Festival provides an Aboriginal cultural exchange event and a national forum for Aboriginal policy debate. Several smaller annual festivals are held in the communities of the region. Most communities are home to an arts centre, including Buku-Llarnngay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala, Bula'bula in Ramingining and Anindilyakwa Arts and Cultural Centre in Alyangula. Nhulunbuy has a strong volunteer culture with over 30 registered clubs and associations. Many of them engage children and their families in community events, the arts, music, and sport and recreation.



POPULATION

Total population	14,494
More than 7 in 10 people are Aboriginal people ^a	72.6%
6 in 100 people were born overseas ^b	6.1%
Almost 9 in 100 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	8.6%

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

FAMILIES

29.5%

3 in 10 families, with children under 15 years, are single parent families

79.2%

Of single parent families, 8 in 10 have a female as head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

25.9%

1 in 4 people speak only English

62.1%

About 6 in 10 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

64.5%

More than 6 in 10 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



22.2%

About 1 in 5 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level)

13.3%

For more than 1 in 8 people, aged 15 and over, Year 12 is their highest level of education

21.1%

For 1 in 5 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



44.8%

More than 4 in 10 people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

14.1%

Of those who participate in the workforce, 1 in 7 people are unemployed

The major employment industries are education and training, mining, and health care and social assistance.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



44.2%

Children and young people, aged 0-24, make up almost half of the population

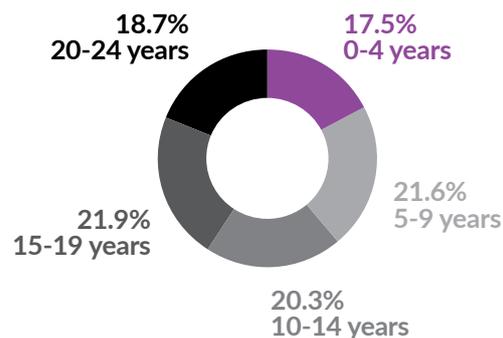
77.3%

More than 3 in 4 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	1,121
5-9 years	1,381
10-14 years	1,303
15-19 years	1,402
20-24 years	1,200
Total	6,407

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).



Big Rivers

The Big Rivers region covers the mid-north and spans the width of the Territory, sharing borders with both Western Australia and Queensland. The main centre is Katherine. The region includes more than 20 other communities and 100 outstations.

Aboriginal people of the Big Rivers region engage in hunting and gathering and enjoy sharing in their culture through a number of festivals including Barunga Festival, Walking with Spirits Festival in Beswick and Freedom Day Festival in Kalkarindji.

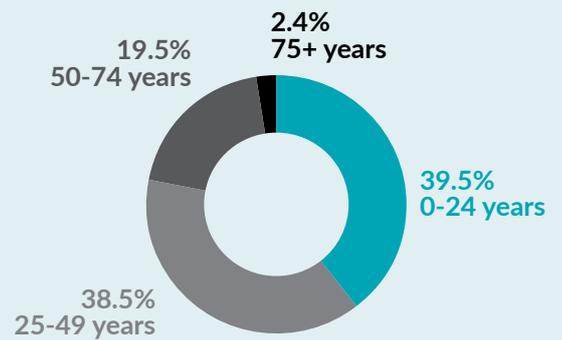


Cultural expression is diverse and celebrated through a rich tapestry of other events such as the Mataranka Rodeo, Pine Creek Gold Rush Festival, Yugul Mangi Ngukurr Festival and the Lajamanu Sports Festival. With a strong agricultural history and current status as the agri-business hub of the Territory, the region holds the Katherine Show as well as other horse-racing and camp drafting events in town and on surrounding cattle stations.

POPULATION

Total population	21,541
More than half of people are Aboriginal people ^a	56.7%
Almost 8 in 100 people were born overseas ^b	7.7%
More than 1 in 10 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	12.5%

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

FAMILIES

26.2% About 1 in 4 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

83.0% Of single parent families, more than 4 in 5 have a female as head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

46.5%

Almost half of people speak only English

33.7%

1 in 3 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

36.7%

About 1 in 3 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



28.1%

Almost 3 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level)

8.3%

Almost 1 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, have Year 12 as their highest level of education

19.2%

2 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, have Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) as their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



51.2%

More than half of people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

9.2%

Of those who participate in the workforce, about 1 in 10 people are unemployed

The major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, and education and training.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



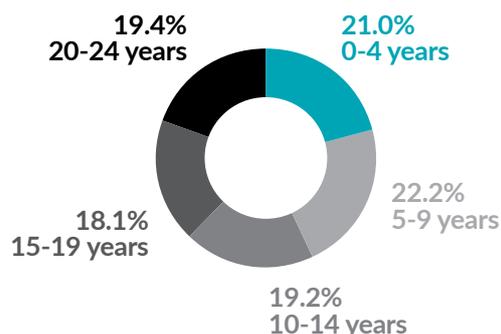
39.5%

4 in 10 people are aged 0-24

70.1%

About 7 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	1,790
5-9 years	1,893
10-14 years	1,637
15-19 years	1,538
20-24 years	1,651
Total	8,510

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).



Barkly

The Barkly region is located in the central desert area of the Northern Territory. The major centre is Tennant Creek, which incorporates seven community living areas. There are 13 other communities and 74 outstations in the region.

The region is vast and rich in culture. For thousands of years, the region has been home to no less than nine Aboriginal groups, and today numerous language groups are represented. In addition to traditional practices including ceremony and hunting and gathering, expressions of culture include the annual Desert Harmony Festival, featuring local art and music, the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, and the Papulu Apparr-kari Language Centre, all in Tennant Creek. There is also a fascinating history of communications, explorers, pastoralists and mining in the region.

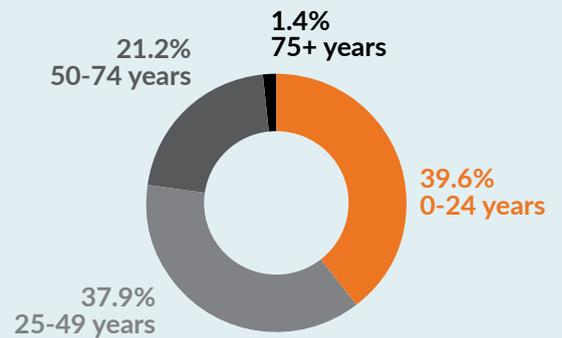


The communities engage in vibrant art and there are several galleries are open to visitors. The region also hosts popular sporting, camp drafting, rodeo and horse-racing events, in Tennant Creek and on cattle stations, and there is the annual agricultural show held each July in Tennant Creek.

POPULATION

Total population	7,237
3 in 4 people are Aboriginal people ^a	74.7%
8 in 100 people were born overseas ^b	7.9%
9 in 100 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	8.7%

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

FAMILIES

33.3%

1 in 3 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

82.1%

Of single parent families, about 8 in 10 have a female as the head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

41.0%

2 in 5 people speak only English

40.5%

2 in 5 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

46.1%

Almost half of people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



23.5%

About 1 in 4 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level)

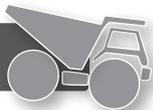
8.5%

For about 1 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, Year 12 is their highest level of education

19.5%

For 2 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



49.2%

Almost half of people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

17.9%

Of those who participate in the workforce, about 1 in 5 people are unemployed

The major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, and agriculture, forestry and fishing.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



39.6%

2 in 5 people are aged 0-24

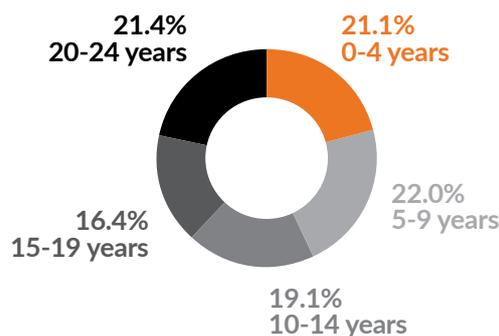
82.7%

More than 4 in 5 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	604
5-9 years	629
10-14 years	547
15-19 years	470
20-24 years	613
Total	2,863

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



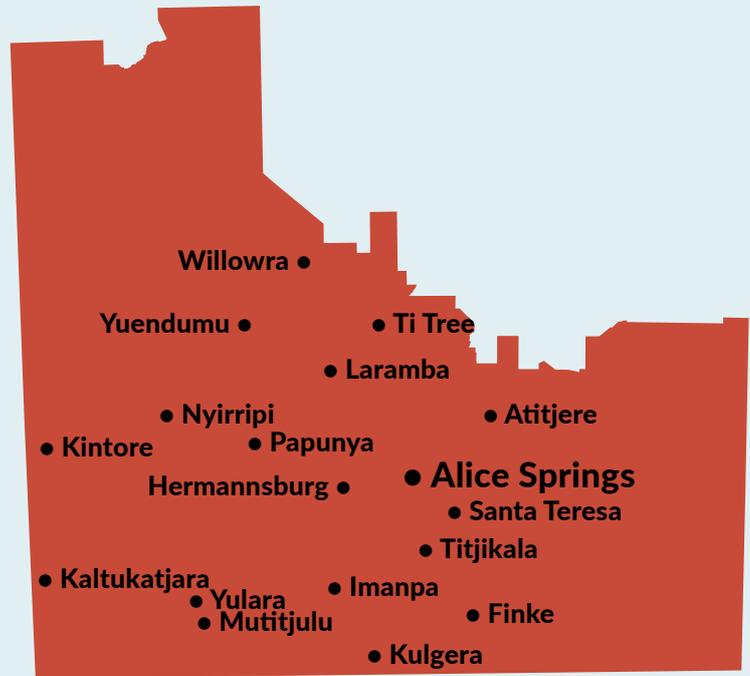
Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).



Central Australia

Central Australia covers the largest geographical area of the six regions, bordering Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland. The major centre is Alice Springs. The region includes 27 communities, 16 town camps and over 200 outstations.

The Aboriginal cultures of the Central Australia region underscore and shape community; they are fostered in significant cultural institutions such as Akeyulerre, Alice Springs Desert Park, the Strehlow Research Centre and the Institute for Aboriginal Development. The spectacular landscape is richly inscribed with stories, song lines, history and tradition from the Aboriginal ancestors through to contemporary cross-cultural society.

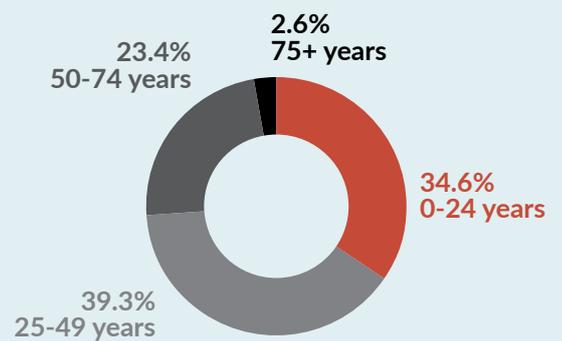


Annual arts, music and sporting events include the Desert Mob art exhibition and marketplace, Bush Bands Bash, Country Clash football carnival, Youth Arts and Music festival (YAM Fest), NAIDOC week and the Phoney Film Festival. Iconic activities in the region include the Finke Desert Race, Camel Cup, Henley-on-Todd dry river boat race, the Parrtjima Festival in Light and the Uluru Field of Light.

POPULATION

Total population	38,171
About 4 in 10 people are Aboriginal people ^a	41.8%
Almost 2 in 10 people were born overseas ^b	18.2%
More than 1 in 10 people lived interstate five years earlier ^b	11.6%

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a ABS Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2016; ^b ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

FAMILIES



25.6%

1 in 4 families, with children aged under 15, are single parent families

83.6%

Of single parent families, more than 4 in 5 have a female as the head of the family

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

54.0%

More than half of people speak only English

21.6%

About 1 in 5 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

31.8%

About 1 in 3 people speak a language other than English at home (including Aboriginal languages)

EDUCATION



37.6%

Almost 2 in 5 people, aged 15 and over, have a higher education qualification (above Year 12 level)

10.8%

For 1 in 10 people, aged 15 and over, Year 12 is their highest level of education

14.5%

For 1 in 7 people, aged 15 and over, Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest level of education

EMPLOYMENT



63.8%

More than 3 in 5 people, aged 15-64, participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

9.2%

Of those who participate in the workforce, about 1 in 10 people are unemployed

The major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, and education and training.⁽¹⁴⁾

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



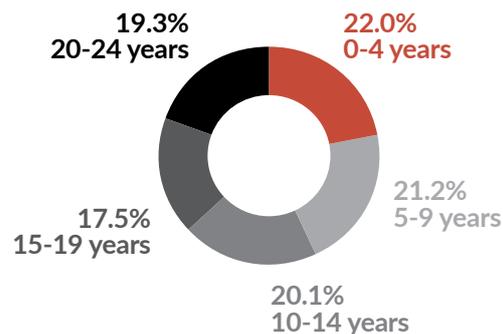
34.6%

More than 1 in 3 people are aged 0-24

53.3%

More than half of children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people^a

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

0-4 years	2,902
5-9 years	2,799
10-14 years	2,653
15-19 years	2,311
20-24 years	2,546
Total	13,211

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2019; ^a Modelled based on SA2, IARE and IREG 2016 ERP and the ABS Census of Population and Housing, August 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

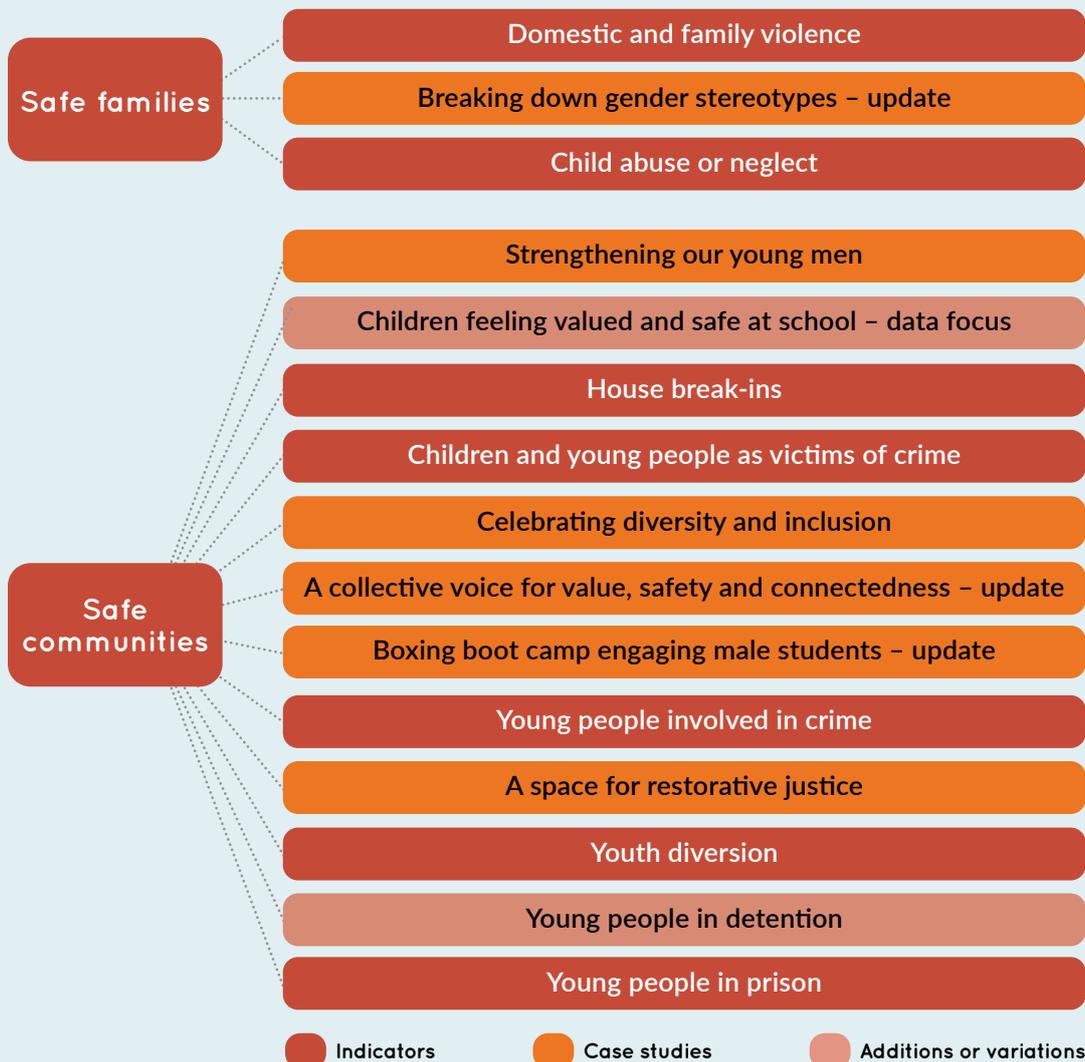


Domain 1

Being valued, loved and safe

Children and young people should be valued, loved and safe in the environment they grow up in, both in the family and the broader community. This need includes having loving family relationships, positive connections with their peers and other adults, and personal and community safety. These factors are critical for children and young people's healthy development and their ability to socialise, to understand society and to shape their future. When children are valued, loved and safe, they are more confident, resilient and have a stronger sense of identity.⁽¹⁵⁾

In this domain, the two outcomes of safe families and safe communities are explored through eight indicators, one data focus and six case studies:



The measures included in this chapter are consistent with those used in the 2019 Story with the addition of one new measure – the number of young people in detention. This new measure responds to a data gap identified in the 2019 Story.

Trend data has been included for two measures – the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiated investigation and the number of children in out-of-home care. The number of children who were the subject of a substantiation has remained stable while there has been a recent decline in the number of children in out-of-home care after a peak in 2018. Further detail on the interpretation of trend data is given within the chapter.

When comparing 2021 data with the 2019 Story, a number of indicators suggest change. For example, the number of notifications of child abuse or neglect and the number of notifications with domestic violence recorded as a contributing factor have increased between the two years, while the number of children in out-of-home care has decreased. The number of apprehensions of males and females has also decreased. Caution is required when making comparison using only two data points and over a short period. Trend data using multiple data points provides a more reliable assessment of change.

1.1 Safe families

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that a happy, loving and understanding family environment is necessary for the development of a child.⁽¹⁶⁾ In the Northern Territory, there are laws to protect children from child abuse and neglect and from exposure to domestic and family violence.^(17, 18)

1.1.1 Domestic and family violence

A safe household should be free from violence. Both being a direct victim of violence and witnessing violence towards other people can have significant physical, psychological and social impacts on children. This can include injury, impaired development, mental health issues and poorer engagement and achievement in education.^(5, 19) In the Northern Territory, children who are exposed to domestic and family violence should be reported to child protection services.

This measure is the annual number and proportion of children, aged 0-17, in notifications with domestic and family violence recorded as a contributing factor.

Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, in notifications with domestic and family violence recorded as a contributing factor



Data source and year: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21; proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 102 children unable to be allocated to a region and 80 children who were interstate residents.

In 2020-21 about 1 in 10 Northern Territory children (10.6%), a total of 6,840 had a notification of abuse or neglect, in which domestic and family violence was recorded as a contributing factor. The proportion of children exposed to domestic and family violence varied across the regions, from about 1 in 17 children (6.0%) in Greater Darwin to almost 1 in 3 children (29.6%) in Barkly.

This measure is the annual number of domestic and family violence offences recorded where children, aged 0-17, were subject to violence or heard/saw the incident.

Number of domestic and family violence offences where children, aged 0-17, were subject to violence or heard/saw the incident (SOF)



Data source and year: NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services (special table extracted on 4 August 2021), 2020-21.
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 37 offences unable to be allocated to a region.

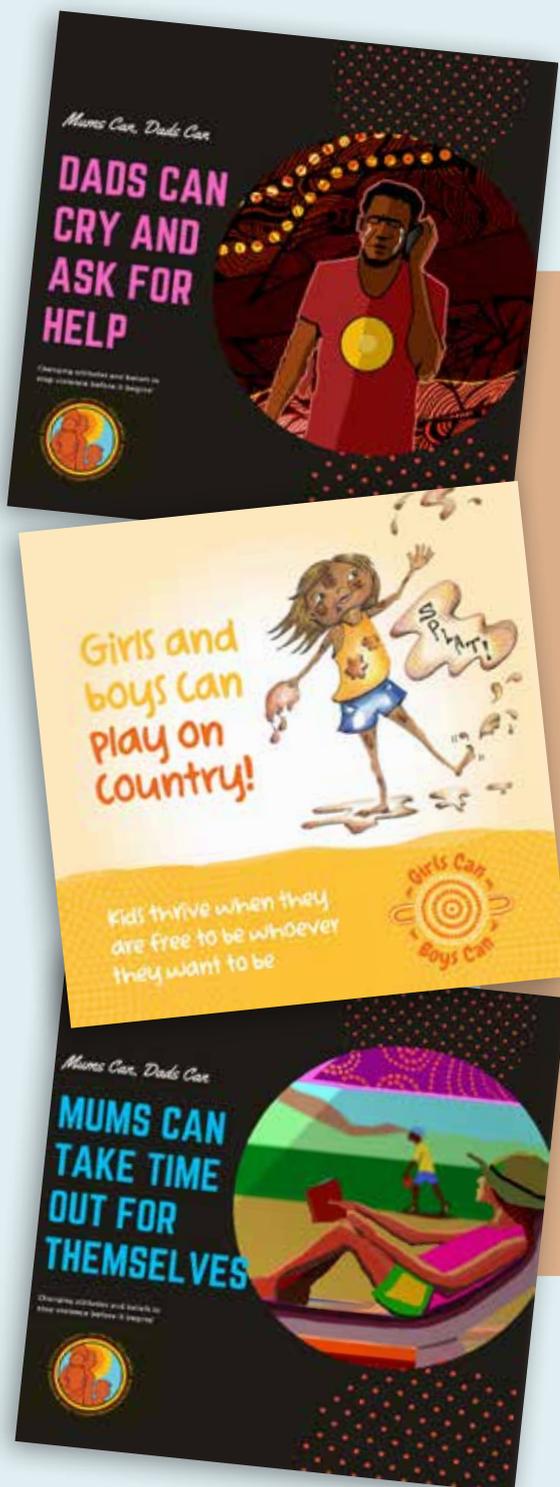
This measure reports the number of offences irrespective of the number of children involved. In 2020-21, there were 1,481 offences recorded in which Northern Territory children were either victims of or witnesses to domestic and family violence. The number of offences recorded was greatest in Greater Darwin (418) and Central Australia (357).

BREAKING DOWN GENDER STEREOTYPES – UPDATE

The Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention program continues the work to challenge gender stereotypes, with a new series of *Mums Can Dads Can* posters. A similar project, *Girls Can Boys Can*, was launched in 2020 to show equal and respectful relationships between girls and boys. Both projects aim to stop violence before it begins, by building awareness in children about equal and respectful relationships between girls and boys, and women and men. The intention is for children to thrive and grow up to be whoever they want to be, free from discrimination.

Meeting the unique circumstances of 2020, the team also developed a set of resources with messages related to the challenges of COVID-19 such as learning from home and changed hygiene habits.

Images: New Mums Can Dads Can and Boys Can Girls Can posters



1.1.2 Child abuse or neglect

Child abuse and neglect refers to behaviour or treatment that either harms or has the potential to harm a child or young person.⁽²⁰⁾ The actions may be intentional or unintentional and include physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Exposure to domestic and family violence is a form of child abuse and neglect.⁽²¹⁾

Child abuse and neglect can have a wide range of impacts on children and young people's development and outcomes later in life. These can include mental health issues, reduced social skills, and a higher burden of disease into adulthood.^(5, 22, 23)

In the Northern Territory, all adults, aged 18 and over, are required by law to notify child protection services if they reasonably believe a child or young person has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.^(17, 24) Notifications are reviewed by a specialised intake team and where appropriate are referred for investigation or support. Mandatory reporting laws vary across Australia.

This measure is the annual number of notifications of suspected child abuse or neglect.

Number of notifications of child abuse or neglect



Data source and year: Australia: Child Protection Australia 2019-20, AIHW. NT and regions: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21.

Note: 1. NT data include 259 notifications unable to be allocated to a region and 155 notifications for children who were interstate residents. 2. Children can be reported on more than one occasion in a year.

In the Northern Territory in 2020-21, there were 28,193 notifications of child abuse or neglect, which is an increase from the 23,427 notifications recorded in the 2019 Story for 2018-19. In the Australian population, there was a similar sized increase in the number of notifications from 396,234 recorded in 2017-18, to 486,300 recorded in 2019-20.

This measure is the annual number and proportion of children, aged 0-17, with notifications of child abuse or neglect.

Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, with notifications of child abuse or neglect



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW Child Protection Australia 2019-20. NT and regions: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21. Proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: NT data include 208 children unable to be allocated to a region and 150 children who were interstate residents.

In the Northern Territory, in 2020-21, more than 1 in 5 children (22.3%) were notified to child protection services. This is ten times greater than the 1 in 50 children (2.1%) with notifications of child abuse or neglect for all children across Australia. The proportion of children with notifications varied across regions from more than 1 in 7 children (15.2%) in Greater Darwin to more than 1 in 2 children (54.8%) in Barkly.

SUBSTANTIATED CASES OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect are those in which an investigation of a notification has confirmed there was reasonable cause to believe the child had been, or was likely to be harmed.

This measure is the annual number of substantiated investigations for children, aged 0-17. The measure may include multiple substantiated investigations for the same child.

Number of substantiated investigations for children, aged 0-17



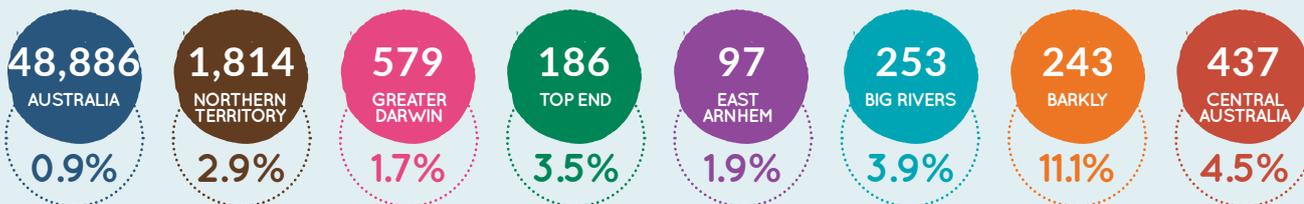
Data source and year: Australia: AIHW Child Protection Australia 2019-20. NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21.

Note: 1. NT data include 15 substantiations unable to be allocated to a region and 4 substantiations for children who were interstate residents. 2. In July 2018 the NT Government introduced the One Child One Case policy to improve the way in which the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities responds to subsequent notifications for children who have a current open case. As a result, fewer investigations have been commenced.

In 2020-21 in the Northern Territory, there were 1,882 substantiated investigations for children, aged 0-17. This is an increase from the 1,553 recorded in 2018-19. The number of substantiated investigations varied across the regions from 97 in East Arnhem to 591 in Greater Darwin.

This measure is the annual number and proportion of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a substantiated notification.

Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a substantiated investigation



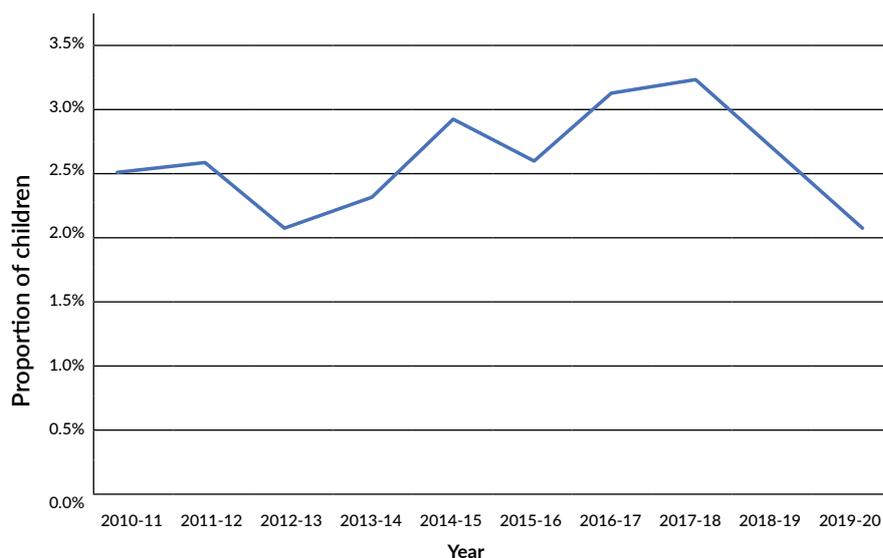
Data source and year: Australia: Child Protection Australia, AIHW, 2019-20. NT and regions: NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21. Proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: NT data include 15 children unable to be allocated to a region and 4 children who were interstate residents.

In the Northern Territory in 2020-21, about 3 in 100 children (2.9%) experienced a substantiated episode of abuse or neglect, which was three times the Australian average of about 1 in 100 children (0.9%) in 2019-20. The proportion of children with a substantiated episode of abuse or neglect varied across the regions from about 2 in 100 children in Greater Darwin (1.7%) and East Arnhem (1.9%) to more than 11 in 100 children (11.1%) in Barkly.



Proportion of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a substantiated investigation, Northern Territory, 2010-11 to 2019-20



Year	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Number	1,572	1,585	1,306	1,444	1,787	1,614	1,896	1,961	1,595	1,276
Percentage	2.5%	2.6%	2.1%	2.3%	2.9%	2.6%	3.1%	3.2%	2.6%	2.1%

Data source and year: NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 1 March 2021), 2010-11 to 2019-20. Proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table). Note: In July 2018 the NT Government introduced the One Child One Case policy to improve the way in which the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities responds to subsequent notifications for children who have a current open case. As a result, fewer investigations have been commenced which is attributable to a correlating reduction in substantiations.

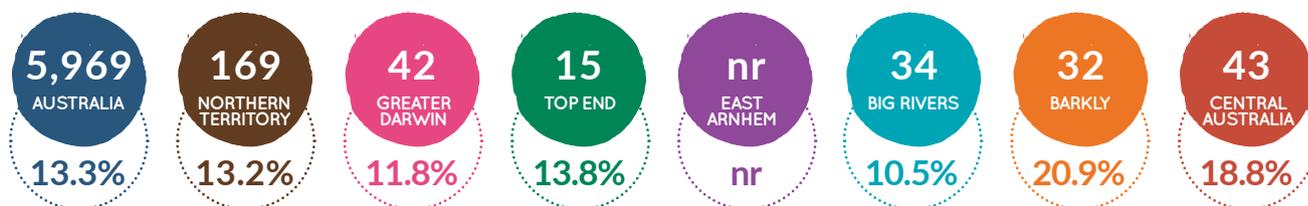
Over the ten years of available data there have been fluctuations in the annual number of Northern Territory children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a substantiated investigation. In the two years since 2017-18 there has been a fall in the proportion of children who were the subject of a substantiated investigation, however while this fall is encouraging there is insufficient evidence to confirm a long-term decline ($p = 0.79$).

CHILDREN WHO ARE SUBJECT TO RESUBSTANTIATION

Resubstantiation refers to the circumstance when children who were the subject of a substantiated episode of child abuse and neglect are the subject of another substantiation within 12 months.⁽²⁵⁾ The resubstantiation rate is a measure of the effectiveness of child protection services.

This measure is the number and proportion of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a further substantiated investigation within 12 months of a previous substantiation.

Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of resubstantiation, within 12 months



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (2020), 2017-18. NT and regions: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21. Proportions calculated using numbers of children who were the subject of a substantiated investigation in 2019-20. Note: 1. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 2. NT data include a number of children unable to be allocated to a region. 3. In July 2018 the NT Government introduced the One Child One Case policy to improve the way in which the Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities responds to subsequent notifications for children who have a current open case. As a result, fewer investigations have been commenced.

In the Northern Territory, about 1 in 8 children (13.2%) involved in a substantiated episode of child abuse or neglect in 2019-20, were the subject of at least one subsequent substantiated episode within the following 12 months. The resubstantiation rate varied across the Northern Territory from about 1 in 10 children (10.5%) with an initial substantiation in Big Rivers to about 1 in 5 children in Central Australia (18.8%) and Barkly (20.9%).

CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

When children are unable to be cared for in their family home, they may be removed and placed in 'out-of-home care'. This can involve short or long-term arrangements such as care by other family members, foster care, group homes or residential care. Out-of-home care is designed to provide children and young people with a safe and stable environment, if attempts to support their family to provide appropriate care have not succeeded. It is important that efforts to support family and community connection are maintained even when in out-of-home care. In many cases, children can be reunited with their families after a temporary period in out-of-home-care.^(26, 27)

This measure is the annual number and proportion of children, aged 0-17, in out-of-home care. Geography is where children are placed and not where they are from.

Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, in out-of-home care

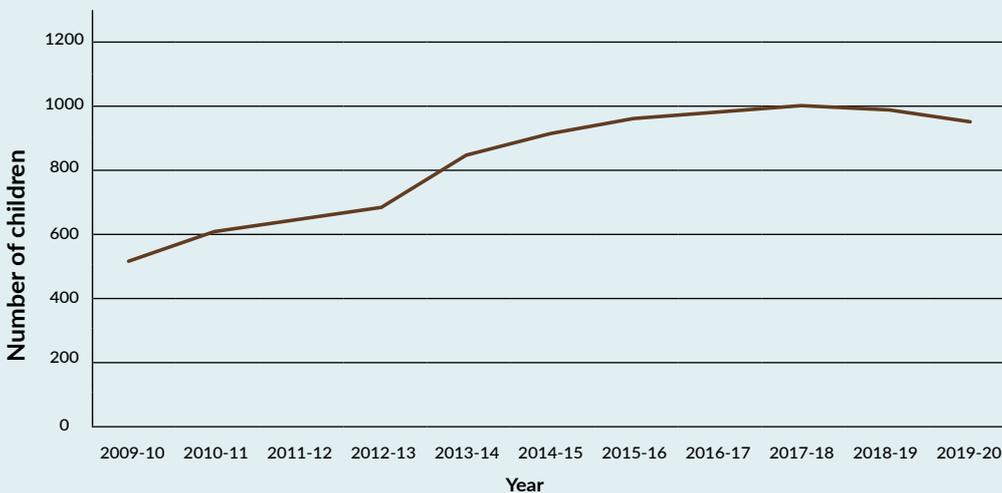


Data source and year: Australia: Child protection Australia, AIHW, 2020. NT and regions: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21. Proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

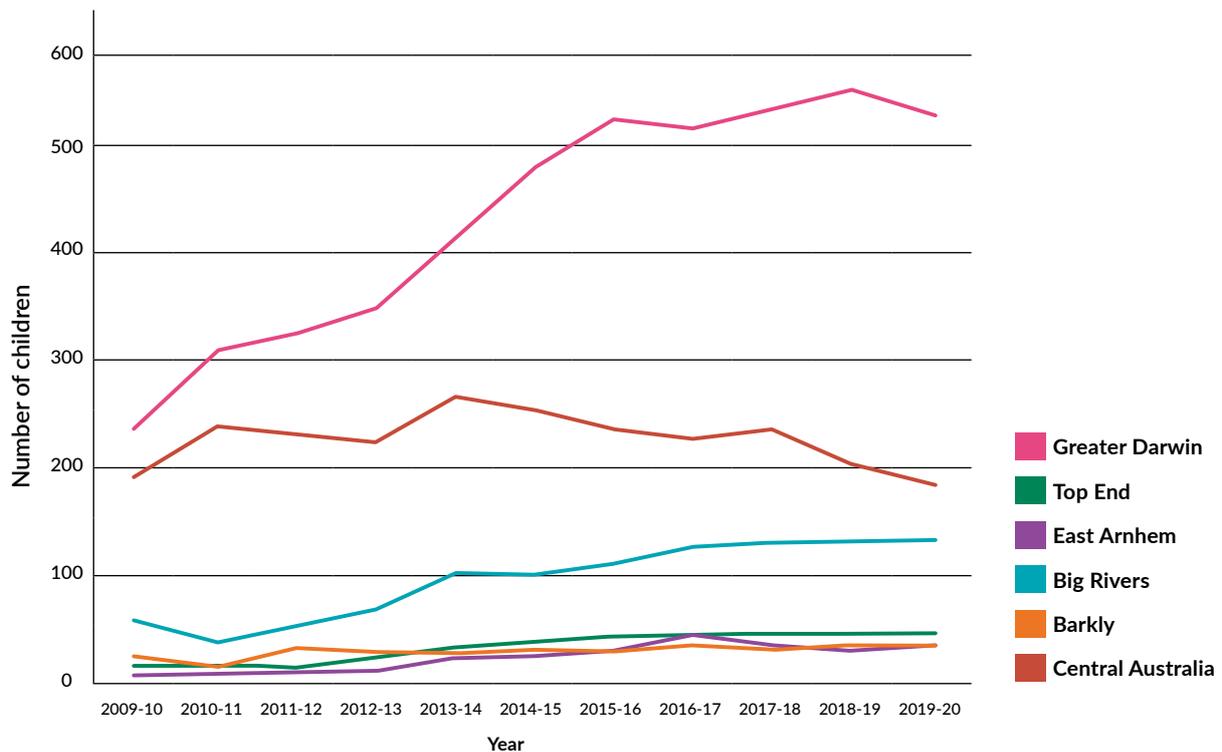
Note: 1. Numbers are estimated at point in time, Australian data are based on 30 June 2020 and NT and regions data based on 1 July 2021. 2. NT data include 10 children who were interstate residents and 58 children unable to be allocated to a region.

In June 2020, 1 in 125 Australian children (0.8%) were in out-of-home care. In the Northern Territory, there was twice the proportion of children in out-of-home care, an average of 1 in 63 children (1.6%) as at 1 July 2021. A location of placement varies with need and with the availability of carers, which is reflected in the varying distribution of children in care across the Northern Territory regions. Children from remote Northern Territory locations may be placed in households in larger centres, such as Darwin and Palmerston. The proportion of children in care in the regions varied from about 1 in 170 children (0.6%) in East Arnhem to about 1 in 45 children (2.2%) in Big Rivers.

Number of children in out-of-home care, Northern Territory, 2009-10 to 2019-20



Number of children in out-of-home care, Northern Territory regions, 2009-10 to 2019-20



Year	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
2009-10	529	240	14	5	54	21	195
2010-11	616	308	14	6	36	13	239
2011-12	653	325	12	7	50	30	229
2012-13	693	350	19	8	66	26	224
2013-14	853	414	30	20	99	25	265
2014-15	921	482	36	23	99	28	253
2015-16	967	526	40	28	109	28	236
2016-17	983	520	41	39	124	32	227
2017-18	1003	538	43	32	128	29	233
2018-19	991	555	43	28	130	31	204
2019-20	955	533	44	32	131	31	184

Data source: Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 1 March 2021), 2009-10 to 2019-20.

Across the Northern Territory, there was a continuing increase in the number of children in out-of-home care from 2009-10 to a peak in 2017-18 before a modest decline to 2019-20. Across the regions the patterns have varied with general increases in Greater Darwin and Big Rivers and a decline in Central Australia. The numbers of children in out-of-home care in other regions has remained low. It should be noted that some children may be moved from remote regions to the larger towns for appropriate placement.



STRENGTHENING OUR YOUNG MEN

Established in 2000, the Clontarf Foundation operates Australia wide in 131 Academies, 19 of which are in the Northern Territory at various middle and high schools, including Gunbalanya and Jabiru in the Top End.

The aims of the Clontarf programs are to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men and equip them with the skills to participate and contribute to society. Through the use of supportive relationships and a safe environment, the boys develop improved self-esteem and confidence which enables them to positively participate in education, employment and in society.

Liam, aged 14, was nervous when he first went to middle school. After joining the Clontarf Academy he felt valued and more confident in himself, "If you're not having a good day or you're not feeling well, you can come and talk to the boys and they try and help you."

Clontarf's Northern Territory Zone Manager Liam Toner said, "We aim to make school a very attractive option for the young men. When they wake up each morning, we want them to be excited to come to school. To do this we create an environment that is engaging and where they feel like they truly belong. Challenges are met every day by the young men in the program who consistently display a level of resilience and commitment."

In 2021, 36 Clontarf Academy participants were enrolled in Term 1 at Gunbalanya, with an average of 75% attendance. At the Jabiru Academy, 27 participants were enrolled with an average of 73% attendance.

An evaluation of the national expansion of the program was conducted in 2017 by Synergistiq. It looked at fifteen Clontarf Academies throughout WA, NSW and QLD. It found that as a result of participating in the Clontarf Academy the majority of students surveyed reported feeling proud of themselves, good about school and more confident when talking with teachers and other adults. The evaluation found of the students surveyed, the majority reported improvements in self-discipline, through attending school more often and trying harder while at school.⁽²⁸⁾

Photo: Kristian and Joseph, Clontarf boys from the Jabiru Academy

1.2 Safe communities

It is important that children and young people grow up in safe communities. Whilst a child's immediate family environment is critical for wellbeing, the safety of the broader community also has a significant influence. Community safety can impact on a child's sense of security and their ability to develop trusting relationships with other adults. Community safety has a number of aspects, including crime rate, safety of public places and schools, safety of infrastructure, trusting relationships with neighbours and levels of social unrest.⁽⁵⁾

CHILDREN FEELING VALUED AND SAFE AT SCHOOL – DATA FOCUS

There is a growing focus in educational institutions to monitor student wellbeing to better inform school policy and improve wellbeing and educational outcomes. There are a number of national and international survey instruments available to schools, some of which have been trialled in Northern Territory schools including in Catholic and Independent schools.

Since 2015, the Northern Territory Government has conducted an annual school survey to collect the views of staff, students, and their parents or guardians. The School Perception Survey (the survey) provides insight into student wellbeing and their experiences at school. Over the last three years, there has been greater emphasis placed on the survey, with participation increasing steadily. In 2020, a total of 9,108 students responded with almost all responses coming from students in the target group of Years 5-12. Respondents were from urban centres (67.2%), remote areas (14.8%) and very remote areas (17.9%).

The survey provides an opportunity for insight into students' perspectives and experiences. In 2020, the largest proportion of student respondents were from Years 4 to 9 (47%), and among these respondents more than 7 in 10 students (72.7%) responded positively to the statement 'I feel safe at school'. A positive response is one in which the respondent agrees or strongly agrees with the statement. Parents also participate and when asked to respond to the corresponding statement 'My child feels safe at this school', 87.5% of the 5,536 parents responded positively.

The survey also asks students whether they agree with the statement 'My school values the language and cultural backgrounds of all students'. Among Year 4-9 respondents, 3 in 4 students (76.8%) responded positively.

Data source and year: NT School Perception Survey 2020, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

1.2.1 House break-ins

Property related crime may have a lasting emotional impact on children and young people.⁽²⁹⁾ The number of reported house break-in offences for houses with children is not available, however there is data on all house break-in offences. This was chosen as one measure of community safety as it relates to a child's sense of safety in their community and at home.

This measure is the annual number of house break-in offences recorded by police.

Number of house break-in offences



Data source and year: Australia: ABS, Recorded Crime Victims, Australia, 2019. NT and regions: Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 11 August 2021), 2020-21.

Note: 1. Australia data is number of victims. NT and regions are number of offences. 2. NT data include 3 offences unable to be allocated to a region.

In 2020-21, there were 1,890 house break-ins reported in the Northern Territory. The largest proportion of these, 712 house break-ins, were in Central Australia.

1.2.2 Children and young people as victims of crime

It can be a traumatising experience to witness or be victim to a violent crime. For children and young people, it can have a long-lasting impact on their development, mental and physical wellbeing and social interactions. ^(5, 30)

Offences against the person are crimes that involve physical harm or force, such as physical assault. Typically, these types of offences will result in injury or bodily harm. ⁽³¹⁾

This measure is the annual number and rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 0-17, of an offence against the person.

Number and rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 0-17, of an offence against a person



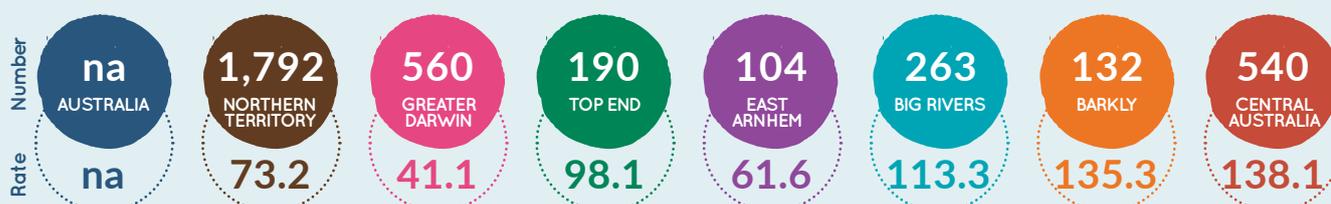
Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 11 August 2021), 2020-21. Rates calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Crimes are counted once for each incident. Victims may be counted more than once, for different incidents, in a year. 3. NT data include 3 victims unable to be allocated to a region.

In the Northern Territory, in 2020-21, there were 1,011 incidents in which children aged 0-17 were the victim of an offence against the person. This is an annual rate of 16.2 victims per 1,000 children. The rate varied across the Northern Territory from 9.7 per 1,000 children in East Arnhem to 33.8 per 1,000 children in Barkly

This measure is the annual number and rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 18-24, of an offence against the person.

Number and rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 18-24, of an offence against a person



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 11 August 2021), 2020-21.

Rates calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Crimes are counted once for each incident. Victims may be counted more than once, for different incidents, in a year. 3. NT data include 3 victims unable to be allocated to a region.

Young adults aged 18-24, are more than four times more likely to be victims of an offence against a person than children. In the Northern Territory, in 2020-21, there were 1,792 incidents in which young adults were victims. This is an annual rate of 73.2 victims per 1,000 young adults. Across the Northern Territory, the rate varied from 41.1 per 1,000 young adults in Greater Darwin to 135.3 per 1,000 young adults in Barkly and 138.1 per 1,000 young adults in Central Australia.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A committee of Darwin High School students are working to deliver the school's annual Pride Day. Since 2016, the school has hosted a Pride Day event (except for 2020 due to COVID-19) as part of their commitment to support LGBTQIA+ students and provide a safe and welcoming learning environment.

The event was initiated by a group of students who saw a need to support the wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ students and presented a proposal, referencing research findings and LGBTQIA+ wellbeing outcomes, to the school board. The event remains student-led with a committee of Year 10-12 students working together to organise the event. Committee member, Martina, speaks of the importance of representation and inclusion: "I want students who fear [being themselves], to be able to see they are not alone at school, they can be who they are and there is support for them."

Supported by the school's leadership, the committee submits a formal proposal to the school board with objectives, plans, income and expenditure for approval. While the school board funded the initial event, the committee has fundraised to cover all costs for future events. The committee partners with community organisations like Headspace to host stalls to provide students with information on available services. Giving back to the community is a part of the day with previous events raising over \$1,000 for organisations which support LGBTQIA+ youth such as Headspace and the Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council (NTAHC).

The Pride Day includes music from LGBTQIA+ artists, rainbow-themed food, games, educational resources on gender and sexuality, and prizes. It is an important part of demonstrating inclusivity and supporting students to feel welcome and safe at school and within their community. Josh reflecting on the day, said, "It is energetic and colourful, we are in it, not just watching performances but immersed in pride, [it] makes me feel less alone."

Photo: Committee members Risini, Jaymee and Martina setting up for Pride Day 2021



A COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR VALUE, SAFETY AND CONNECTEDNESS – UPDATE

The Student Voice Positive Choice (SVPC) initiative continues to focus on changing the narrative around young people in Palmerston, by providing opportunities for students to advocate for what is right, ensuring young people feel safe, connected and valued. SVPC now encompasses 11 Palmerston and rural schools, with school principals refining SVPC’s direction to focus on three key areas – school, local and global. In 2020, students across the schools chose to work together to support children by raising money for the Starlight Children’s Foundation. In 2021, students have implemented a recycling campaign designed to educate their peers. Students have also written a song, titled Stronger Together, which is a call to action, identifying that choices play a part in our future.

Image: SVPC participants from Palmerston schools



BOXING BOOT CAMP ENGAGING MALE STUDENTS – UPDATE

Taminmin College’s boot camp program restarted in Term 2, 2021 after a brief pause. The program is being run by two teachers and the college chaplain. About 14 male students from Years 7-8 are currently engaged and each week they meet to participate in circuit-based physical exercises as well as team building activities. They work together to set personal goals and reflect on their progress as a group. A highlight of the program is a fishing trip at the end of term to celebrate their achievements.

Photo: Taminmin chaplain Aaron Ford running the morning circuit to start the session

1.2.3 Young people involved in crime

Young people, aged 10-17, are subject to the *Youth Justice Act 2005* (Northern Territory). The need to treat children and young people differently to adults within the criminal justice system is globally recognised and endorsed by the United Nations.⁽³²⁾ In the Northern Territory the minimum age of criminal responsibility (the age at which a child can be charged with an alleged criminal offence) is 10 years old.

There are many reasons why children and young people might commit a crime, and there are varying levels of crime severity. Crimes committed by young people have a significant impact on the wellbeing of the offender and those around them. Children and young people who commit crimes are more likely to have lower educational engagement and achievement, less social participation and a higher risk of future offending.⁽⁵⁾

This measure is the annual number and rate (per 1,000 population) of apprehensions of males and females, aged 10-17.

An apprehension is any offence where a young person was arrested, issued a summons or notice to appear before court or referred for youth diversion.

Number and rate (per 1,000 population) of apprehensions of males, aged 10-17



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 17 August 2021), 2020-21; rates calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Apprehensions are calculated as one event for a person for one date. 3. NT data include 1 apprehension of a male from interstate and exclude 1 apprehension of a person whose sex was unknown. 4. In July 2020 the NT Department of Attorney General and Justice changed their standard counting rules to include where a young person received a 'Youth Diversion Assessment' as they are alleged to have committed an offence(s).

Number and rate (per 1,000 population) of apprehensions of females, aged 10 to 17



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 17 August 2021), 2020-21; rates calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 3. NT data include a number of females unable to be allocated to a region. 4. Apprehensions are calculated as one event for a person for one date. 5. In July 2020 the NT Department of Attorney General and Justice changed their standard counting rules to include where a young person received a 'Youth Diversion Assessment' as they are alleged to have committed an offence(s).

In 2020-21, there were 1,825 apprehensions of young people, aged 10-17, in the Northern Territory. Of these, 1,500 apprehensions (82.2%) involved males and 325 (17.8%) involved females. There has been a drop in apprehensions for both young males and females from the numbers reported in the 2019 Story. Across the Northern Territory, the rate of apprehension of males aged 10-17 ranged from 68.3 per 1,000 population in Greater Darwin to 269.8 in Central Australia. Among females, aged 10-17, the rates varied from 10.8 per 1,000 population in Top End to 75.3 in Central Australia.



A SPACE FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Youth Justice Group Conferencing (Group Conferencing) is a restorative justice program which has been operated by Jesuit Social Services across the Northern Territory since 2017. Under the *Youth Justice Act, 2005 (NT)*, young people pleading guilty to an offence can be referred by the Courts to participate in a Group Conference prior to sentencing. Referrals can also be made via the Back on Track program and other diversionary and sentencing pathways. Since its commencement the program has seen 107 Group Conferences held (January 2017 to June 2021).

Restorative justice views crime as more than breaking the law – it recognises crime also causes harm to individuals, relationships and the community. A Group Conference creates a safe space where affected parties can understand what happened, how people have been affected, and make a plan to repair the harm and improve things for the future.

For young people, a Group Conference provides the opportunity to tell their story, develop insight into the true impact of their offending behaviour, and take practical steps to repair the harm they have caused and avoid further offending. For victims, it provides a safe and structured space for their voice to be heard and to have a say in how the young person can make amends.

An internal evaluation of the program undertook conversations with young people and victims. Over the first two years, all but one young person reported an improved understanding of the impact of their behaviour. Almost 6 in 10 young people (59%) indicated their understanding improved 'a lot'. One young person shared, "All of it, it was one big change. It was like a wake-up call for me that I had to change and stop doing bad stuff and concentrate on my future."

In conversations with victims, almost 8 in 10 victims (78%) shared they were satisfied with the overall process and would recommend Group Conferencing to other victims of crime. Over 8 in 10 victims (85%) believed the young person had a better understanding of the impact of their actions on the victim at the end of the conference.

Photo: A space set up for a Group Conference in Katherine

1.2.4 Youth diversion

When a young person is arrested, they may be referred to a youth diversion program.⁽³³⁾ Youth diversion options include verbal and written warnings, family group conferences, victim-offender group conferences and drug diversions.⁽³⁴⁾ Youth diversions such as victim-offender conferencing are designed to help the young person learn about the implications of their crime, make amends for harm caused and encourage behavioural change.⁽³⁵⁾

This measure is the annual number of diversions issued to young people, aged 10-17. A young person can be referred for more than one type of diversion and can receive a diversion more than once in a year.

Number of diversions for young people, aged 10-17



Data source and year: NT Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Services (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21. Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 66 diversions for young people with unknown address.

In 2020-21, young people aged 10-17 were provided with 467 diversions. The majority of these were written warnings, followed by family group conferences. The number of diversions varied across the regions from 24 in Barkly to 119 in Big Rivers.

1.2.5 Young people in detention

A young person, aged 10-17, found guilty of a criminal offence can be sentenced to serve time in a youth detention centre. The Northern Territory has youth detention centres in Darwin and Alice Springs with an alternative youth justice infrastructure model under development in Tennant Creek. United Nations guidelines state a young person should only be detained as a last resort, and for the shortest appropriate amount of time.^(16, 36)

This measure is the daily average number of young people, aged 10-17, in a youth detention centre, in a 12-month period.

Daily average number of young people, aged 10-17, in a youth detention centre



Data source and year: NT Department of Territory Families Housing and Communities (special table extracted on 19 August 2021), 2020-21. Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include an average of 2.0 young people with unknown or interstate address. 3. This measure reports where the young person was located at the time of the offence.

In 2020-21 there was a daily average of 31.8 young people, aged 10-17, in a youth detention centre. The average varied from less than 1 young person (0.9) each day from East Arnhem to 10 young people (10.4) from Central Australia and 12 young people (11.8) from Greater Darwin.

1.2.6 Young people in prison

In the Northern Territory, when a young person is aged 18 and over they are subject to the law as an adult. If proven guilty of a criminal offence they can be sentenced to serve time in an adult prison or a work camp.

This measure is the daily average number of young men and women, aged 18-24, in Northern Territory prisons in a 12-month period. The measure includes prisons and work camps.

Daily average number of young men, aged 18-24, in Northern Territory prisons



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21.
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 2.3 young men from interstate or with no known address.

Daily average number of young women, aged 18-24, in Northern Territory prisons



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table extracted on 9 August 2021), 2020-21.
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 0.3 young women from interstate or with no known address.

In 2020-21 there was a daily average of 285.5 young men and 11.0 young women, aged 18-24, in Northern Territory adult prisons. Most young men had a residential address in Central Australia (81.1) or Greater Darwin (90.7). Over half of the young women were from Greater Darwin (6.1).







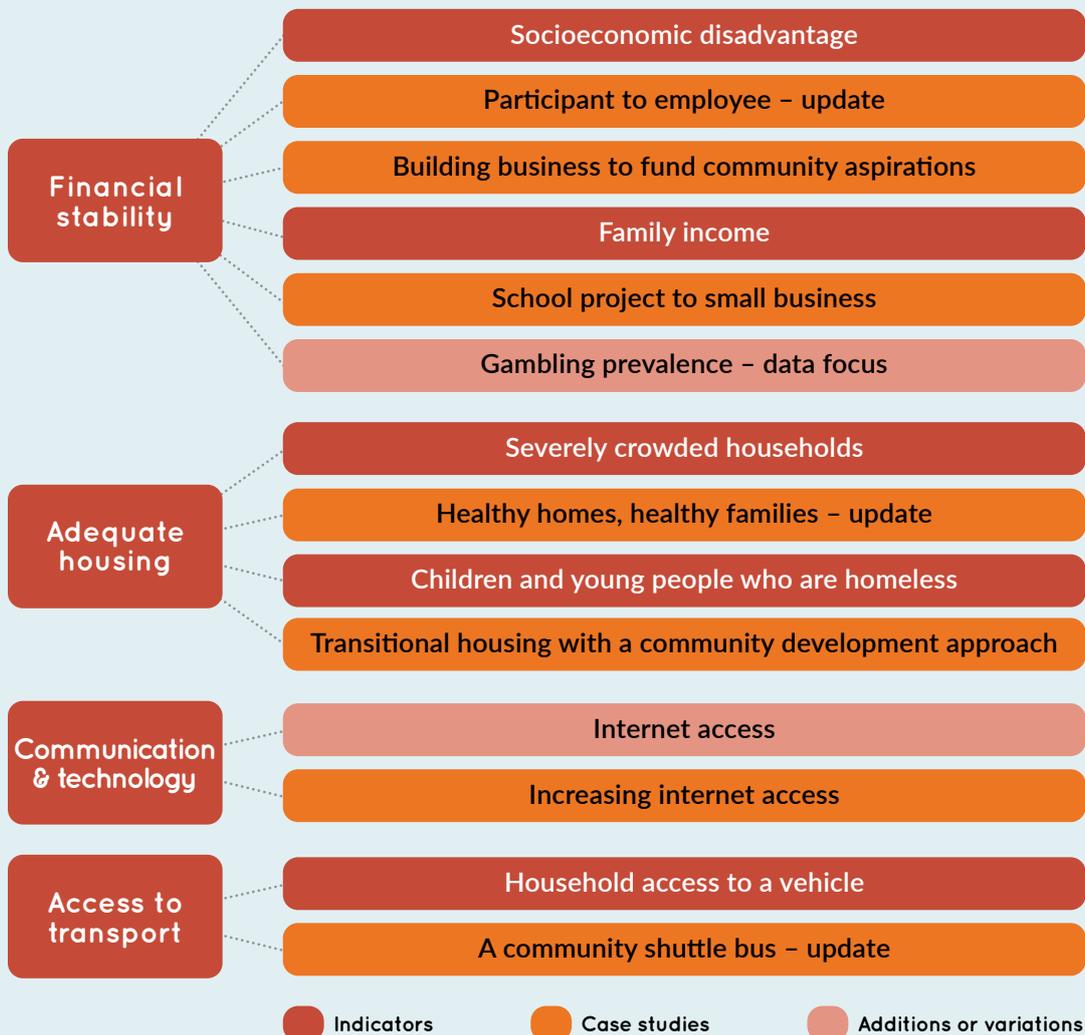
Domain 2

Having material basics

Material basics are the foundational elements that children and young people need in life. These include a safe house to live in, adequate and nutritious food, clean water and appropriate clothing. Income is crucial for a family to pay for basic living expenses. Children who experience poverty early in life are more likely to experience ongoing disadvantage.

Government policy and community infrastructure have a direct effect in this domain. Welfare payments, housing support and services such as public transport and accessible shops are important influences on the material wellbeing of children and young people.

In this domain, four outcomes of financial stability, adequate housing, communication and technology, and access to transport are explored through six indicators, one data focus and seven case studies:



The majority of measures in this domain are reported from the 2016 Census and so there are no changes since the 2019 Story (apart from some minor adjustments for altered regional boundaries). Data across three data points have been included for one key indicator – the proportion of children living in low income families. The number of children living in low income families has increased in the Northern Territory and across all regions with the exception of Greater Darwin. Further interpretation is given within the chapter.

A measure specific to children, aged 14 and under, has been added to the indicator of internet access. Mobile phone use is an important aspect of communication access and remains a data gap.

In the 2019 Story, gambling was identified as an important factor affecting the material wellbeing of children and young people. A population survey conducted in the Northern Territory in 2018 is used in this Story to highlight characteristics of gambling through a data focus story. There remains a gap in the availability of reliable regional data in the area of gambling.

2.1 Financial stability

The financial security of a family plays a key role in the wellbeing of children. Inadequate financial resources can adversely affect children’s health and opportunities in life.⁽³⁷⁾

2.1.1 Socioeconomic disadvantage

Disadvantage can be defined as the lack of opportunity to participate fully in society, and includes factors such as low income, lack of material basics and social exclusion.^(5, 38)

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) are a series of measures which use Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data to indicate relative advantage and disadvantage of regions around Australia.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) is an index of relative disadvantage. The IRSD is constructed using data about a variety of factors influencing disadvantage including income, employment, education, housing and family structure.⁽³⁹⁾

The measure of IRSD is a score for relative socioeconomic disadvantage, with scores below 1,000 indicating relative disadvantage, and scores above 1,000 indicating relative advantage.

Scores for relative socioeconomic disadvantage



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The Northern Territory has a score of 939 indicating relative disadvantage. Scores vary substantially across the Northern Territory with Greater Darwin at 1,039, Central Australia and Big Rivers at 893 and 804 respectively, and East Arnhem at 723. Barkly and Top End have the lowest scores at 679 and 640 respectively.



PARTICIPANT TO EMPLOYEE – UPDATE

Maggie Kerinaia continues to work for Play to Connect, co-facilitating and co-developing content for the program and supporting Tiwi families. Maggie has also progressed to work for Relationships Australia, co-facilitating the Bringing Up Great Kids program. Working across the two jobs has provided Maggie with an increased sense of confidence and financial steadiness. Maggie says, “My favourite thing about working with children and their families is that we learn from each other about everything and anything.”

Photo - Maggie at a Play to Connect planning day



BUILDING BUSINESS TO FUND COMMUNITY ASPIRATIONS

The people of Mandjaway in East Arnhem were concerned as funding for their homeland community was under threat, and their school house was at risk of closure. “Our school is bicultural, it keeps our culture and our identity alive. If our classroom closes, we will lose our kids to the problems of bigger towns. We also need jobs on our homeland, so we can be strong and independent.”

Led by the vision of the late Nalwarri Ngurruwuthun, a tertiary qualified teacher and school principal, the community considered options for economic activity. Over six years, the community worked with friends and partners, blending traditional Yolju culture with western business concepts. It has led to the creation of the Knowledge Water business, packaging the spring water from their land to sell locally and across Australia. “Water has always been part of our culture. It is a symbol of knowledge, and a powerful link to our past. Now we are using water to protect our future.”

The main objectives of Knowledge Water are to support economic activity and education in the region while making the community of Mandjaway more self-sufficient. The business is creating jobs on country, and through profits being invested into their community trust, will provide scholarships for Yolju people to train as tertiary qualified teachers. “We want to keep our culture strong here in Mandjaway. And we want to take control of our own future. That is why we decided to build this Knowledge Water business.”

Photo: Dylan Ngurruwuthun on country with a carton of Knowledge Water

2.1.2 Family income

The ability of families to afford material basics depends on income, expenses and size of the family.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Many families with children have difficulty balancing their income with ongoing expenses. However, among all families there is a group who are formally classified by the Department of Social Services to be 'low income' families with children. These are families with children aged 15 and under with incomes under \$36,515 per annum in receipt of the Family Tax Benefit Part A (whether receiving income support payments or not). The income is adjusted, or equivalised, for the number and composition of the household.⁽⁴¹⁾

This measure is the percentage of children, aged 15 and under, living in low income households (earning under \$36,515 per annum and in receipt of the Family Tax Benefit).

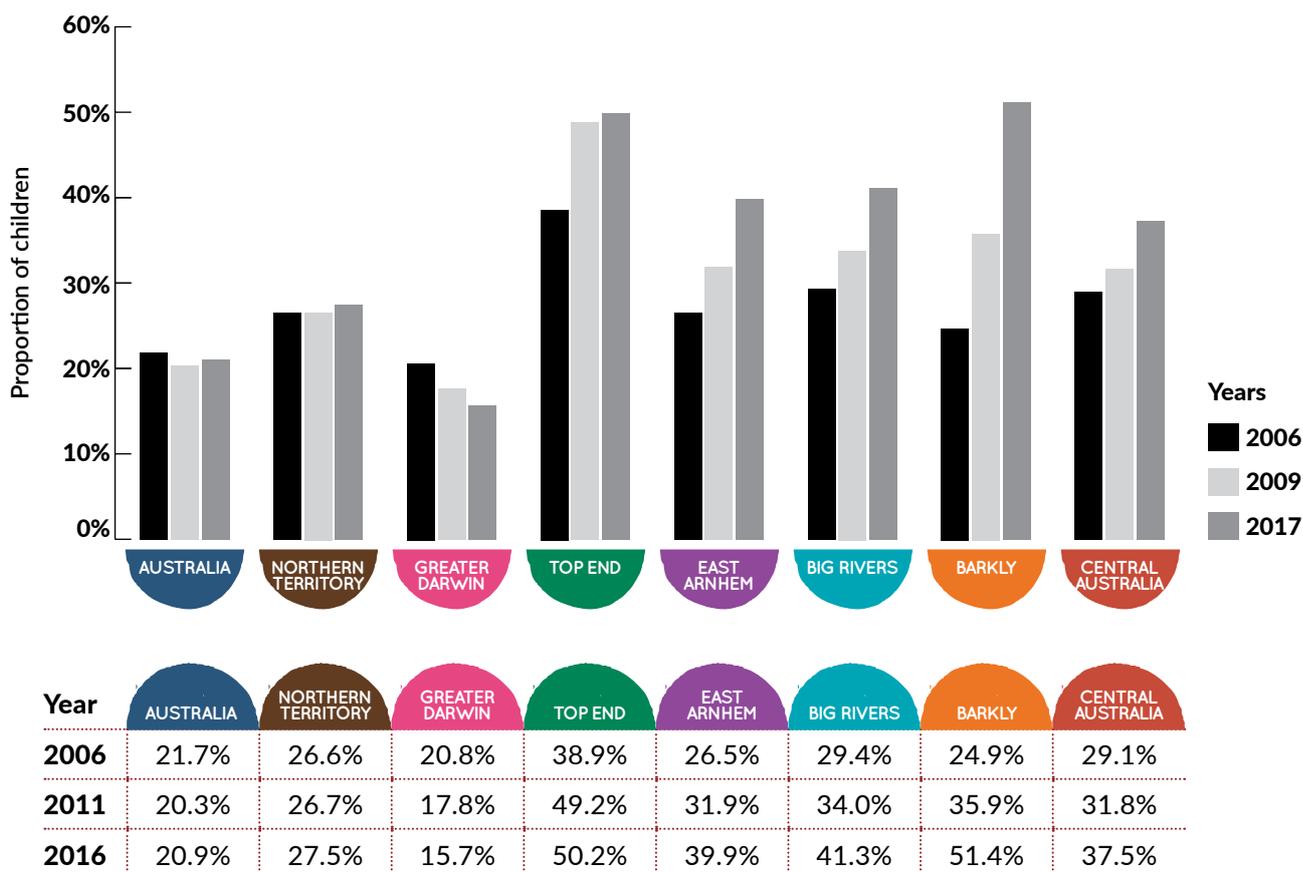
Proportion (%) of children, aged 15 and under, living in low income households  



Data source and year: Department of Social Services, prepared by PHIDU (special table), June 2017.
Note: Households are private dwellings only.

In Australia, 1 in 5 children (20.9%) live in low income households. In the Northern Territory, more than 1 in 4 children (27.5%), live in low income households. Across the Northern Territory, this ranges from a low of about 1 in 6 children in Greater Darwin (15.7%) to about half of children in Top End (50.2%) and Barkly (51.4%).

Proportion of children, aged 15 and under, living in low income families; Australia, Northern Territory and regions; 2006, 2009 and 2017



Data source and year: Department of Social Services, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2006, 2009 and 2017.

In Australia, over the three data points, in 2006, 2009 and 2017, the recorded proportion of children, aged 15 and under, living in low income households has fluctuated slightly. In the Northern Territory, there is evidence of an increase from 26.6% to 27.5%. Across the regions, there has been a decrease in Greater Darwin while there have been consistent increases in all other regions. The most substantial increase has been in Barkly, where the proportion of children living in low income households has doubled between 2006 (24.9%) and 2017 (51.4%).



SCHOOL PROJECT TO SMALL BUSINESS

Luke Haywood and Jett Egan, aged 16, are Year 11 students and business owners. Last year, as part of a project for their Personal Learning Program at St Philips College in Alice Springs, they came up with an entrepreneurial gardening business idea.

Through personal drive and commitment, and with the support of their parents, brothers and the Business Enterprise Centre, Luke and Jett progressed their idea and developed it into a business. "Our parents have been our biggest supporters, most of the equipment is owned by our parents. They drove us everywhere before Luke got his driver's licence, getting our name out and about." J&L Gardening was officially registered in 2021 and now has over 50 customers. In October 2020, they helped plan, budget and create a Peace Garden for their college.

They do most of their jobs on weekends, and are slowly building up an equipment base, initially purchasing items to fill the gaps in what they could borrow from their parents. "At the start we only knew basic skills, we have had to learn things like irrigation and invoicing. Now we have the capacity for more complex projects on top of normal garden maintenance." They have learnt a lot about running a business, from organising insurance, to invoicing, budgeting and cashflow management.

Luke reflects, "You just have to do it. Some people have great ideas, but they don't have the will. The message I would send to everyone is to not second guess themselves, and from there you grow your confidence and knowledge."

Photos: Jett (left) and Luke (right) on the job

GAMBLING PREVALENCE – DATA FOCUS

Gambling, while a form of entertainment for many, is also associated with harm to the gamblers and those around them, including children and young people. High rates of harmful gambling manifest in tangible harms directly arising from gambling.

In 2018, a survey of the Northern Territory adult population found 73% of the non-Aboriginal population participated in at least one gambling activity in the previous 12 months, compared with 67% of the Aboriginal population.⁽⁴²⁾ While Aboriginal people were less likely to gamble, they were more likely to gamble on electronic gambling machines or pokies. Pokies have been known to be the most risky form of gambling for over 20 years.⁽⁴³⁻⁴⁵⁾ Yet they are the most accessible form available. The survey found 25% of Aboriginal adults had gambled on pokies in the last year and 4% weekly, compared with 18% and 1.3% for non-Aboriginal people respectively.

Using a standardised measure for risk of harmful gambling, the survey found that 5.3% of Aboriginal gamblers were classified as high risk of harmful gambling and a further 29% at moderate or low risk, compared with less than 1% and 15% respectively in the non-Aboriginal population. Of concern, the high risk of harmful gambling increases to over 12% of Aboriginal people who gamble on pokies.

Because of gambling, 12% of at-risk Aboriginal gamblers experienced family/relationship harms, 11% work/study harms, 17% financial harms and 41% emotional/ psychological harms. Gambling can not only cause problems for the gambler, but also for those around them. 17% of Aboriginal adults in the Northern Territory were negatively affected by someone else's gambling, compared with 5% of non-Aboriginal adults. Financial harms were the most endorsed (11%), followed by relationship/family harms (9.4%), emotional/psychological harms (8.6%), work/study harms (2.4%) and criminal (1%).

Data source and year: NT Gambling Prevalence and Wellbeing Survey, prepared by Menzies School of Health Research (special table), 2018.



2.2 Adequate housing

Adequate housing refers to housing that is safe, stable and an appropriate size for the household. Having adequate housing is important for the physical and mental health and wellbeing of children and young people. Children and young people need to have access to room for study, play and uninterrupted sleep.⁽⁵⁾

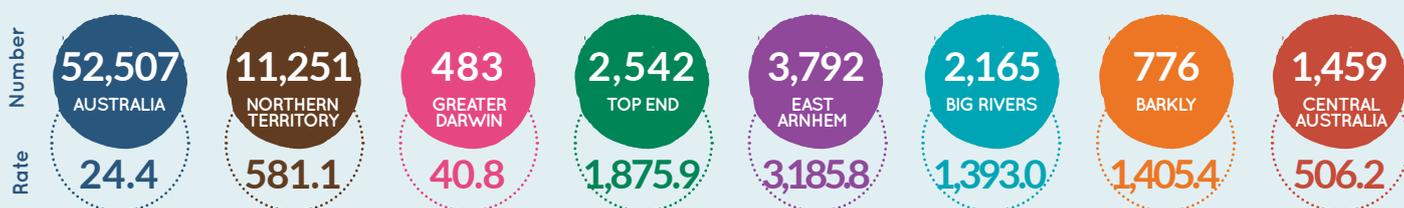
2.2.1 Severely crowded households

Overcrowding occurs when a house is too small for the number of occupants. The Australian definition of overcrowding is based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) which specifies that one bedroom can accommodate two children under five years, two children under 18 years of the same sex or a couple.^(46, 47) The ABS defines households as overcrowded if they would need three extra bedrooms to accommodate the number of people usually living there. A household is considered severely crowded when four or more extra bedrooms would be needed. People living in severely crowded dwellings are considered homeless.⁽⁴⁸⁾

Information on overcrowding is not available for families, children or young people. This measure is based on people of any age living in severely crowded dwellings.

This measure is the number of people and rate (per 10,000 of the population) living in severely crowded dwellings.

Number and rate (per 10,000 of the population) of people living in severely crowded dwellings  



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

Note: 1. Rates are expressed as number per 10,000 population of usual residents.

In Australia, 52,507 people live in severely overcrowded dwellings compared to 11,251 people in the Northern Territory. When expressed as a rate per 10,000 of the population, there are over 26 times more people living in severely overcrowded dwellings in the Northern Territory than in Australia. Across the Northern Territory, this rate ranges from 41 per 10,000 people in Greater Darwin to 3,186 per 10,000 people in East Arnhem.



HEALTHY HOMES HEALTHY FAMILIES – UPDATE

Thamarrurr Development Corporation's Healthy Homes program continues to support the Wadeye community to look after their homes to improve the health and wellbeing of families. House assessments highlighted a problem with pests and so two local staff were trained to become licensed pest technicians. Since then, the team have noticed a big improvement in the households they have treated for pests.

A key priority of the Healthy Homes program is increasing coordination across services. The team are working on developing a shared database to be used by all service providers to better understand the needs of families. In 2020, the team pivoted to focus on keeping families safe from COVID-19, working with the clinic to educate the community about the risks. Together with the Women's Centre, Healthy Homes staff delivered hygiene packs to every household in Wadeye.

Photo - Moses, Tom and Xavier, the Healthy Homes team

2.2.2 Children and young people who are homeless

The ABS defines homelessness as the condition when a person's current living arrangement is in a dwelling that is inadequate; has no secure tenure; or does not allow them to have control of, and access to space for social relations. This includes people living in temporary arrangements, boarding houses, tents or sleep out and in severely overcrowded dwellings.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Homelessness can be hard to measure. For young people, a common form of homelessness is couch surfing.⁽⁵⁰⁾ In data collections, such as ABS censuses, it is hard to tell the difference between someone who is visiting a friend or homeless and couch surfing.

Being homeless can affect the wellbeing of children and young people in many ways, including physical and mental health, participation in education and in the community. While poverty is a common feature of homelessness, other factors such as family and domestic violence, overcrowding, mental health issues, disability, discrimination and insecure income are also major contributors to youth homelessness.^(50, 51)

This measure is the proportion of children and young people, aged 0 to 24 years, who are homeless.

Proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 0-24, who are homeless  



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The proportion of children who are homeless is much higher in the Northern Territory (8.2%) than Australia (0.6%). There is significant variation in the proportion of children and young people who are homeless across the Northern Territory. In Greater Darwin, about 1 in 100 children and young people (0.9%) were homeless in 2016, with this increasing to 21 in 100 in Top End (21.5%) and 35 in 100 in East Arnhem (35.4%).





TRANSITIONAL HOUSING WITH A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT APPROACH

Since September 2020, the Apmere Urtle Transitional Housing Program (Apmere Urtle) has been providing supported accommodation to young families, single mothers and older single women in Alice Springs. Consisting of 20 units, it has been developed as a transitioning housing model with a community development approach.

The Apmere Urtle approach was developed in partnership between Community Housing Central Australia and the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group, with the support of the Northern Territory Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities. In its first three months, Apmere Urtle completed a staged intake to capacity and has remained full since.

Apmere Urtle is aimed at people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless and demonstrate a willingness to engage in a personalised program of services. Residents are supported according to their individual or family needs. Support includes child playgroups, a cooking program, legal support and training in a variety of life skills.

Members of the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group said, "Children do well when parents are supported. This transitional housing space supports the wellbeing of children, parents and families so everyone can thrive in a housing space with strong supports that feels like a community."

Apmere Urtle supports residents with the necessary skills to transition into maintaining their own home. There are entry interviews, tenancy agreements and inspections. Ongoing support is provided when moving into independent long-term accommodation. There has been one person who has made the transition into alternative accommodation, with another two on the way.

The program aims to reduce homelessness, building capacity and skills of residents in a supportive community environment. Tully McIntyre, Coordinator at Community Housing Central Australia, which operates the program said, "When children live in stable homes, they have better health outcomes, go to school, and thrive in their lives. We want people to have their own home and the opportunity to access support, resources and training."

Photo: A mother with her child at Apmere Urtle

2.3 Communication and technology

2.3.1 Internet access

Access to internet is considered necessary for children and young people to engage in education, training, employment and social interaction. The COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to online learning across the country has highlighted the importance of access to internet and technology at home. Most households in Australia had internet access at the time of the last census in 2016.⁽⁵²⁾ Remoteness and lack of infrastructure mean that households in the Northern Territory are less likely to have access to adequate internet services.

This measure is the proportion of households which accessed internet from their dwelling.

Proportion (%) of households where internet was accessed from dwelling  



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In Australia and the Northern Territory, the majority of households accessed the internet in 2016 (83.2% and 79.0% respectively). This varied across the Northern Territory with under 6 in 10 households in the Barkly (58.6%) and Top End (59.2%) accessing the internet, and over 8 in 10 households in Greater Darwin (84.8%).

This measure is the proportion of children, aged 14 and under, living in dwellings from which internet was not accessed.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 14 and under, living in dwellings from which internet was not accessed



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In 2016, 1 in 20 Australian children (4.8%) lived in dwellings where internet was not accessed. For the Northern Territory this increased to almost 4 in 20 children (18.7%). Across the Northern Territory regions the proportion varied from about 1 in 20 children (6.4%) in Greater Darwin to about 9 in 20 children (46.0%) in Barkly.



INCREASING INTERNET ACCESS

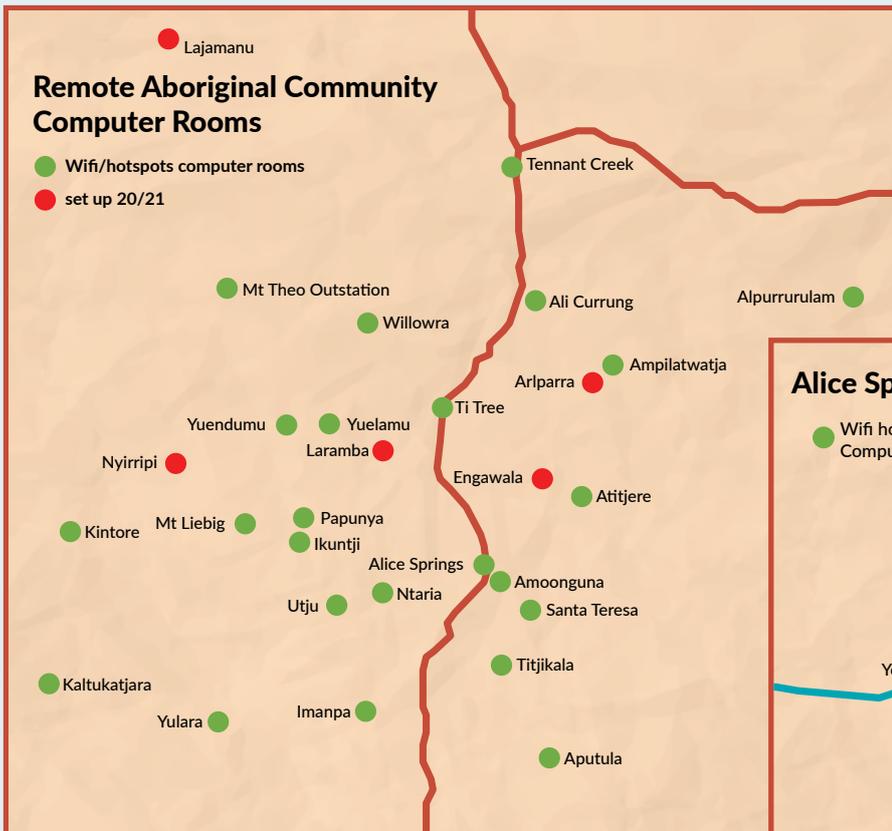
The Central Australian Youth Link Up Service (CAYLUS) has been working to overcome the challenges of internet access in communities across Central Australia and Alice Springs. These areas often do not have access to the same level of telecommunications infrastructure and resources as other areas of the Northern Territory. The work began in 2002 with the first computer room established in Papunya to help children and young people who had fallen behind in their education. Since then, CAYLUS have been working to establish computer rooms in other communities.

In 2020, COVID-19 resulted in changes to the way people travelled and interacted, highlighting the importance of access to technology and communications. People living in remote communities needed to travel into town to access services, which increased the risk of exposure to COVID-19. To facilitate people being able to stay safe in communities, the project was expanded with extra funding to increase the number of wi-fi hotspots and computer rooms throughout the region.

Since 2020, five new wi-fi hotspots and computer rooms have been established in remote communities (Nyirripi, Lajamanu, Engawala, Arlpara, Laramba). There are 27 communities across Central Australia and 12 town camps in Alice Springs which now have either a wi-fi hotspot or a computer room, or in some cases both. Community control is an important part of the project and communities have the capacity to restrict access to particular websites they deem harmful, either temporarily or permanently.

Initial feedback has been positive, with two families from one of the communities stating they feel their children and young people are safer now, as they don't need to travel into the town to obtain internet access.

Images: Maps created using Google Earth



2.4 Access to transport

Access to transport is important to ensure a child or young person can access healthcare, participate in learning or employment, connect with country and cultural practices such as hunting and gathering, and engage with the broader community.

2.4.1 Household access to a vehicle

Major centres in the Northern Territory, such as Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, have public transport systems. However, young people living in other parts of the Northern Territory rely on private motor vehicles for transport. Younger children generally depend on motor vehicles within their immediate household.

This measure is the proportion of dwellings with no motor vehicle.

Proportion (%) of dwellings with no motor vehicle



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

About 1 in 10 households (10.7%) in the Northern Territory do not have a motor vehicle, compared to 1 in 14 households (7.5%) across Australia. In the Northern Territory, the proportion varies from about 1 in 20 households (5.3%) in Greater Darwin to about 6 in 20 in East Arnhem (30.6%) and Top End (33.8%).

A COMMUNITY SHUTTLE BUS – UPDATE

The community shuttle bus has continued to run in Katherine, providing residents with free transport into town. Run by the Kalano Community Association, the bus transports an average of 550 people each week providing easier access for business, medical and recreational needs through the day. Users of the bus service say the money they save on the cost of taxis means they can better afford groceries and other household expenses. Kalano also runs a night patrol service to help people travel home or to safe locations after the shuttle bus stops in the afternoon.

Photo: Katherine's community bus transports an average of 550 people each week



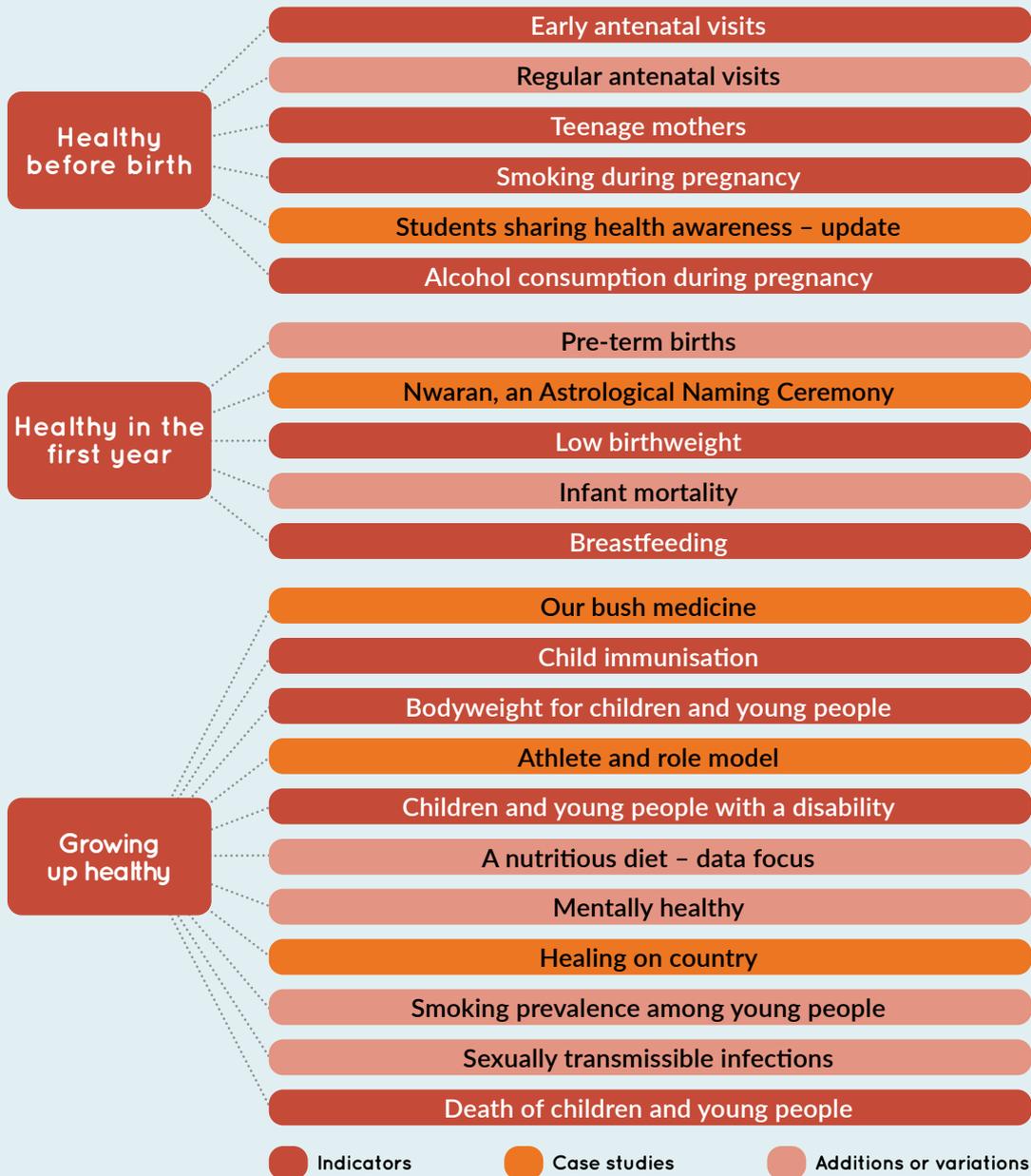


Domain 3

Being healthy

Being healthy is a state of complete physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental wellbeing.⁽⁵³⁾ It is essential to take good care of the health and wellbeing of children and young people to ensure good health and opportunity into adulthood. Health is impacted by many factors including individual physiology, lifestyle, environmental and cultural influences and access to appropriate health care and support services.⁽⁵⁾ Children are particularly vulnerable in their early years and dependent on parents and caregivers for their physical and emotional needs.

In this domain, three outcomes of healthy before birth, healthy in the first year and growing up healthy are explored through 16 indicators, one data focus and five case studies:



In this Story, there are a number of developments in the measures used to indicate the health of children and young people from the 2019 Story. A measure of pre-term birth has been added as an additional indicator of being healthy in the first year of life to be consistent with national reporting for the Closing the Gap Agreement.⁽²⁾ Three indicators of the health of young people have also been added in areas identified as data gaps in 2019 – smoking prevalence, being mentally healthy and incidence of sexually transmissible infections (STIs). The mental health of children and young people is important but is a broad concept and difficult to report using any single measure. Mental health-related hospital admission rates has been chosen as it is a consistent and reliable measure. However, it is acknowledged hospital admission reflects only one aspect of mental health. Another new measure to consider the health of young people is rates of STIs. STIs have a substantial impact on the wellbeing of young people, and this is particularly relevant as young people in the Northern Territory begin their reproductive lives earlier than in other parts of Australia. For 2021, STI rates are reported for two common diseases – chlamydia and gonorrhoea. Another data gap identified in 2019 has been considered using survey data as a data focus – children meeting the minimum recommended consumption of fruit and vegetables.

Trend data has been added for three key indicators: regular antenatal visits, alcohol consumption during pregnancy and pre-term births. Both the proportion of pregnant women having regular antenatal visits and the proportion of pre-term births have increased over the seven years of available data. The proportion of women reporting smoking during pregnancy has decreased. Further detail on the interpretation of trend data is given within the chapter.

When comparing 2021 data with the 2019 Story, a number of measures suggest change. For example, the number of pregnant women having early antenatal care has increased across the Northern Territory, while a second example is a slight increase in the proportion of teenage mothers. However, caution is required when making comparison over a short period and using only two data points. Trend data using multiple data points provides a more reliable assessment of change.

3.1 Healthy before birth

A standard pregnancy term is about 40 weeks. Many factors, including the age, nutrition, physical and emotional health of the pregnant woman and access to medical care, affect the health of a newborn baby. The care provided, and the actions taken to ensure the health of the pregnant woman and unborn child are important for birth outcomes and the health of a child. In Australia, midwives and other birth attendants record information on the health of pregnant woman and babies throughout pregnancy and birth.

Antenatal care is the care received from health professionals during pregnancy to support the health of both the pregnant woman and the unborn child.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The availability of health services can impact a pregnant woman’s ability to receive regular antenatal care. In the Northern Territory, antenatal care is provided at hospital and specialist clinics, through general practice or at a community health clinic. Women living in remote areas may have to travel to a major centre at around 18-20 weeks of pregnancy to have an ultrasound or other tests, and at 37 weeks to await the birth. There are six hospitals where pregnant women can give birth in the Northern Territory.⁽⁵⁵⁾

3.1.1 Early antenatal visits

Antenatal care in the first trimester of pregnancy (less than 14 weeks) is important for identifying high risk pregnancies. Women who begin receiving antenatal care in the first trimester generally have better health outcomes for themselves and the unborn child.⁽⁵⁶⁾

This measure is the proportion of pregnant women who had their first antenatal visit in the first trimester (less than 14 weeks), out of all women who gave birth.



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

In 2019, 85.3% of pregnant women in the Northern Territory had an early antenatal visit. This is more than the proportion reported for Australia (74.2%). The proportion varied across the Northern Territory from about two-thirds of pregnant women (66.3%) in East Arnhem to about 9 in 10 pregnant women (92.4%) in Greater Darwin.

3.1.2 Regular antenatal visits

Regular antenatal care is important for monitoring the health of the pregnant woman and the unborn child. It is recommended that women attend at least seven antenatal visits across a full-term (40 weeks) pregnancy, depending on their history of pregnancy and other risk factors.⁽⁵⁷⁾ The 2019 Story reported on pregnant women who attended less than seven antenatal visits. To align with national reporting, this Story reports the proportion of pregnant women who had five or more antenatal visits during their pregnancy.

This measure is the proportion of pregnant women who had five or more antenatal visits during their pregnancy, out of all women who gave birth.

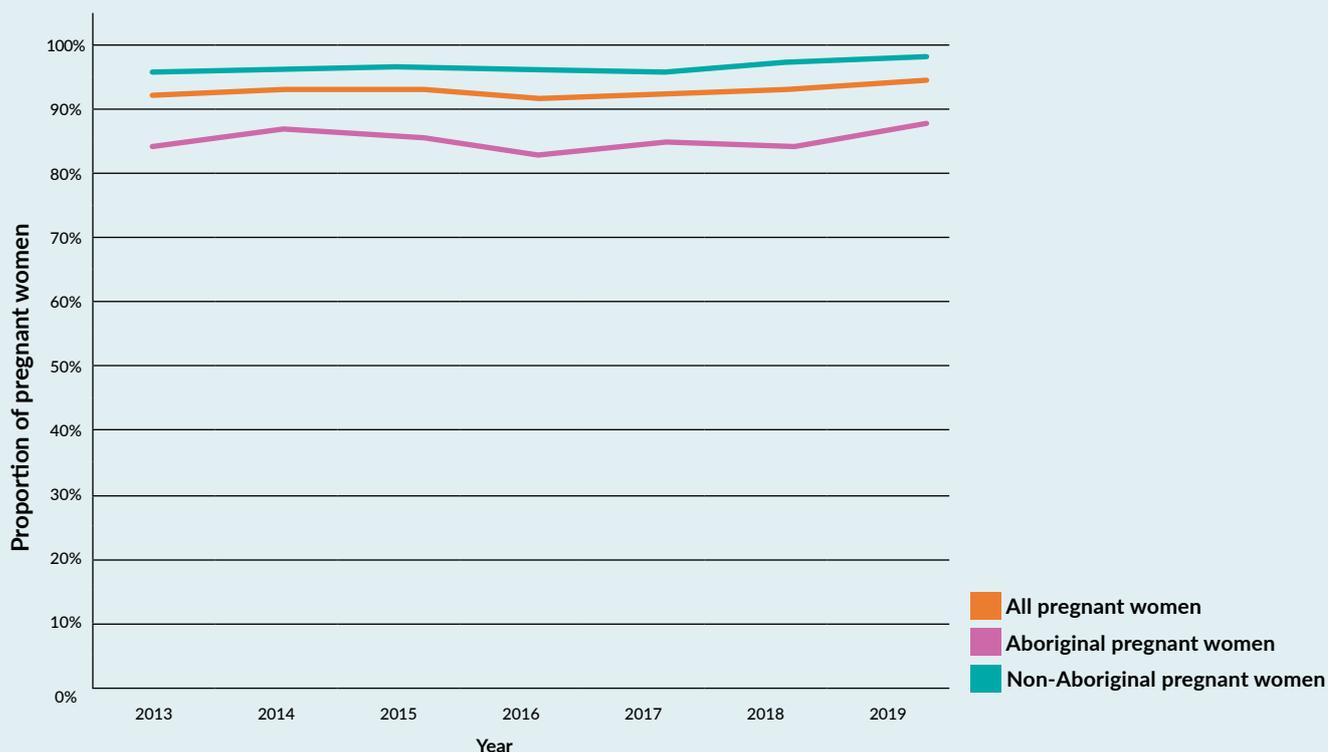
Proportion (%) of pregnant women who attended five or more antenatal visits  



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and region: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

Most pregnant women in the Northern Territory had regular antenatal visits, with more than 9 in 10 pregnant women (94.3%) attending five or more visits during their pregnancy. This is similar to the proportion across Australia (93.8%). Across the regions, the proportion ranged from about 8 in 10 women (83.7%) in Barkly to more than 9 in 10 women in most other regions.

Proportion of pregnant women who attended five or more antenatal visits, by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory, 2013 to 2019

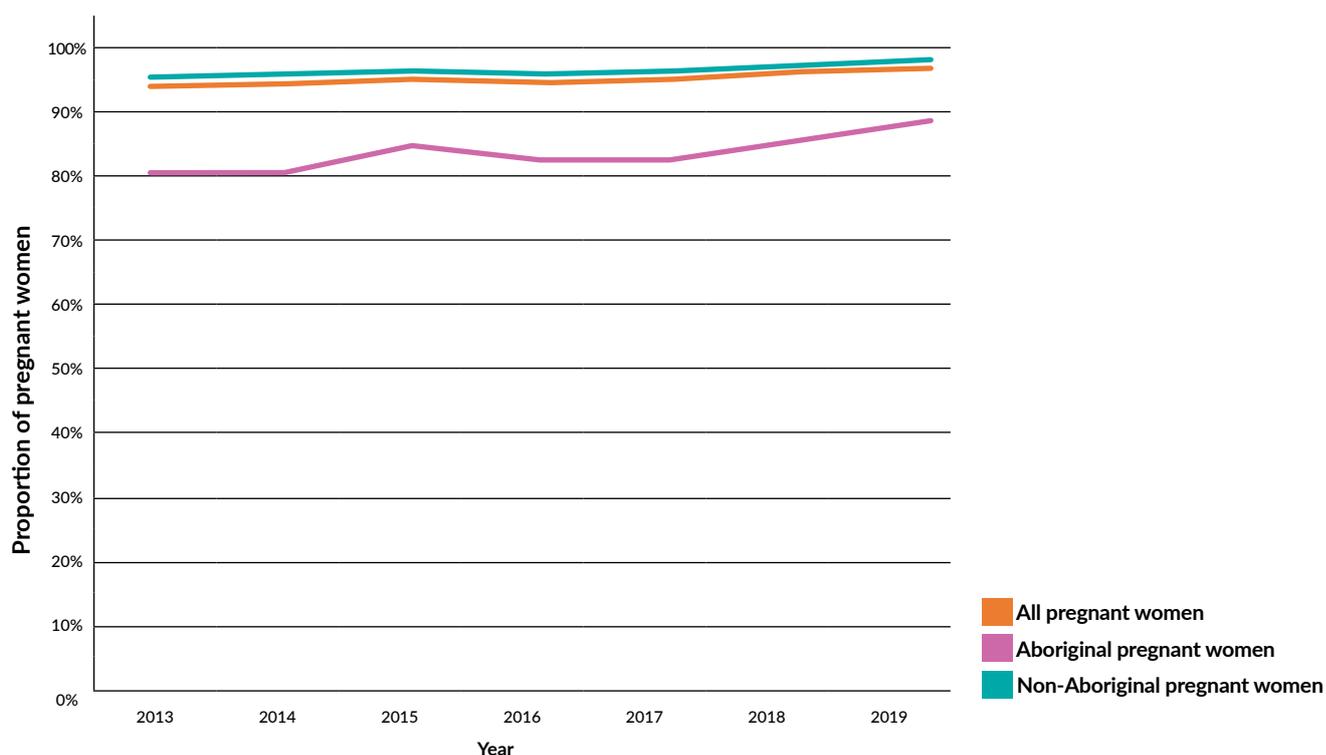


Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	91.9%	92.8%	92.6%	91.7%	92.4%	93.0%	94.2%
Aboriginal pregnant women	84.3%	86.6%	85.4%	82.9%	85.0%	84.3%	87.4%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	95.3%	95.8%	96.2%	95.9%	95.9%	97.2%	97.8%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

Over the seven years of available data there has been an apparent increase in the recorded proportion of Northern Territory women attending five or more antenatal visits. This is largely a result of the increase, by about 0.4% per year ($p = 0.009$), for non-Aboriginal women.

Proportion of pregnant women who attended five or more antenatal visits, by Aboriginal status, Greater Darwin, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	93.6%	94.0%	94.6%	94.2%	94.4%	95.7%	96.6%
Aboriginal pregnant women	80.3%	80.4%	84.3%	82.4%	82.4%	85.8%	88.0%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	95.2%	95.5%	95.9%	95.6%	96.0%	97.1%	97.8%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

For Greater Darwin, over the same seven years, the recorded proportion of women attending five or more antenatal visits has increased for both Aboriginal women, by 1.4% per year ($p = 0.01$) and non-Aboriginal women by 0.5% per year ($p = 0.001$). For all women in Greater Darwin the proportion increased by 0.5% per year ($p = 0.01$).

Reporting trend data is restricted to regions with estimates based on 20 or more women. When proportions are based on small numbers, there is a large random variation between the years.

3.1.3 Teenage mothers

Teenage pregnancy can be a risk for the health of the pregnant woman and the unborn child. Babies born to women under 20 years of age are more likely to have a low birthweight, pre-term birth and other neonatal conditions.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Having children at a young age can also impact the woman's opportunities for education and employment.⁽⁵⁹⁾

This measure is the proportion of births to women aged under 20, out of all births.

Proportion (%) of births to women aged under 20



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

In 2019, almost 6 in 100 births (5.9%) in the Northern Territory were to women aged under 20. This is three times more than the proportion for Australia (2%). There was substantial variation in the proportion of young mothers across the Northern Territory, from 2 in 100 births in Greater Darwin (2.0%) to 13 in 100 births in Barkly (13.4%) and Top End (13.3%) and 15 in 100 births in East Arnhem (15.3%).



STUDENTS SHARING HEALTH AWARENESS

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions the Ramingining School and HealthLAB's usual program did not run in 2020. Rather, as part of the 2020 National Science Week's water theme, HealthLAB provided Ramingining School with water desalination kits and resources to educate children about healthy drink choices.

The Ramingining School's celebration of National Science Week in August 2021 was also postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions preventing HealthLAB and other presenters from travelling. The School are keen to ensure the program happens in 2022.

Ramingining School and HealthLAB have worked in partnership for over five years, benefiting from a consistent appreciation for engaging science and health education. HealthLAB continue to run sessions across the Northern Territory to educate children and young people about positive lifestyle choices and taking ownership of their health.

Photo: Water desalination kits on their way to Ramingining School

3.1.4 Smoking during pregnancy

Tobacco smoking during pregnancy can be harmful to the unborn child. Smoking is associated with increased risk of pre-term birth, placental complications and perinatal death.⁽⁶⁰⁾

This measure is the proportion of women who reported smoking at any point during pregnancy, out of all women who gave birth with a reported smoking status.

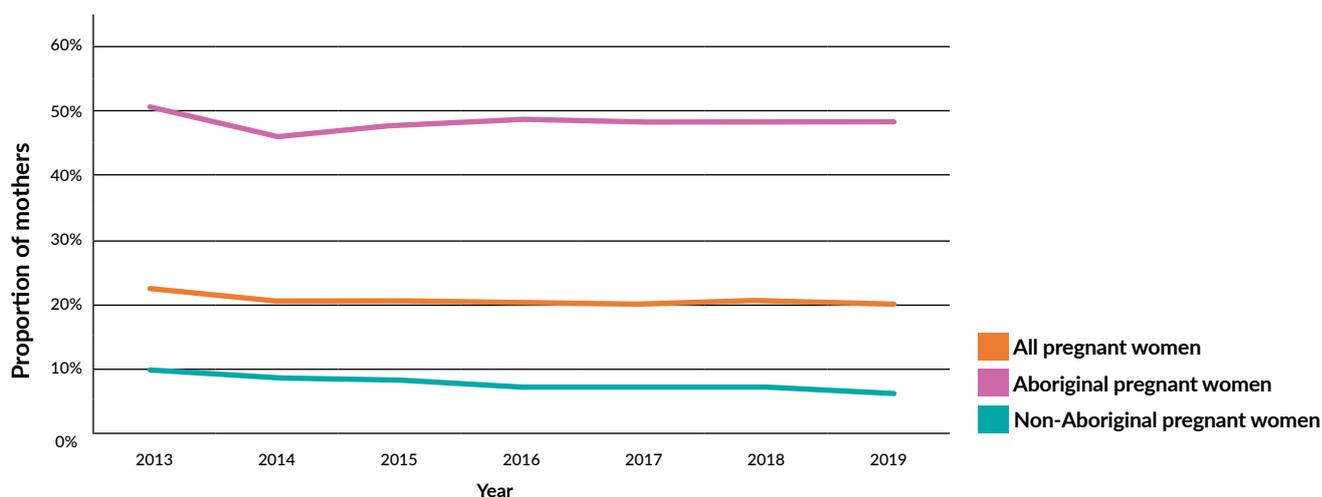
Proportion (%) of women who reported smoking during pregnancy 



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

In Australia, about 1 in 10 women (9.6%) reported smoking during pregnancy. In the Northern Territory, the proportion was substantially higher at about 2 in 10 women (20.2%). Across Northern Territory regions, the proportion of women smoking during pregnancy ranged from 1 in 10 women (10.6%) in Greater Darwin, about 4 in 10 women in East Arnhem (42.1%) and Big Rivers (41.0%), and 5 in 10 women (51.0%) in Top End.

Proportion of women who reported smoking during pregnancy by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory, 2013 to 2019

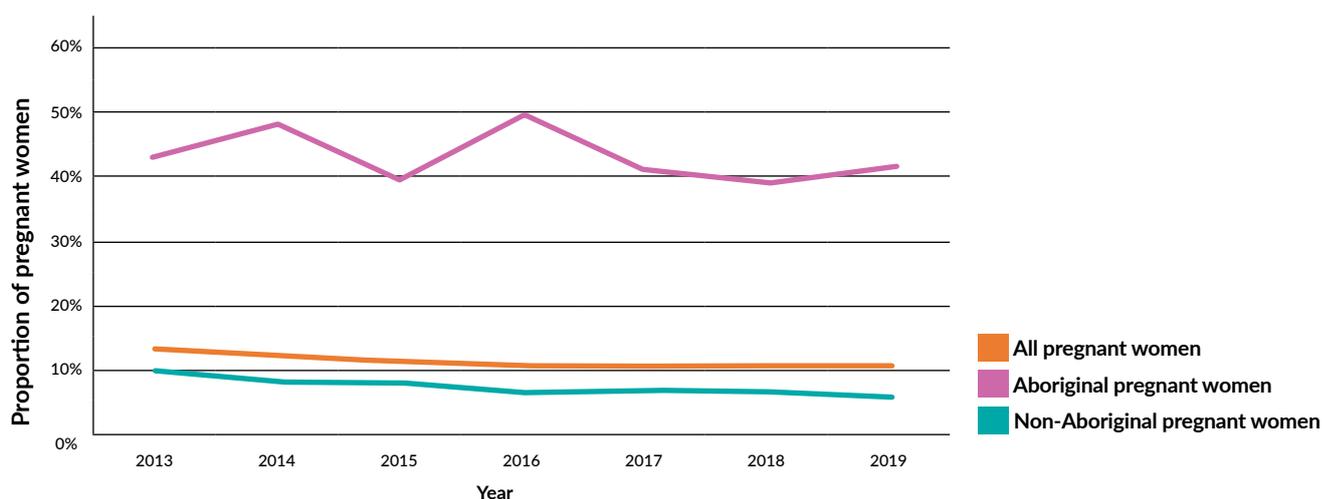


Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	22.7%	20.9%	21.1%	20.5%	20.2%	20.4%	20.2%
Aboriginal pregnant women	50.5%	46.0%	47.7%	48.8%	48.0%	48.3%	48.4%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	10.0%	8.7%	8.3%	7.1%	7.3%	7.0%	6.1%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

Over the seven years of available data, from 2013 to 2019, the proportion of Northern Territory women who reported smoking during pregnancy decreased by 1.6% per year ($p = 0.02$). There was strong evidence of a decrease for non-Aboriginal women, estimated at 6.9% per year ($p = 0.001$) but no evidence of change for Aboriginal women.

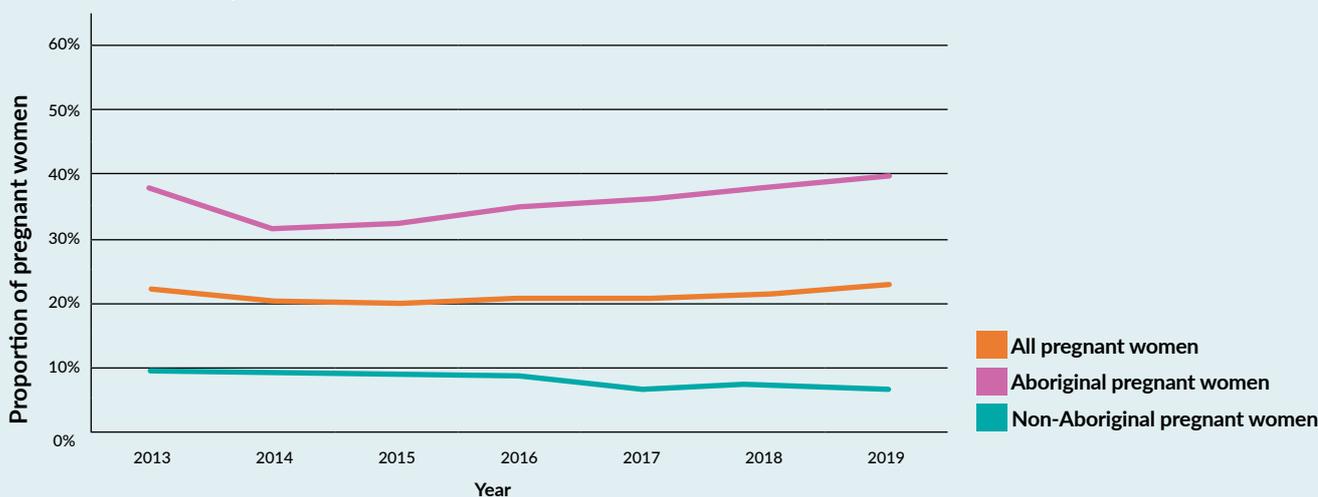
Proportion of women who reported smoking during pregnancy by Aboriginal status, Greater Darwin, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	13.5%	12.4%	11.5%	11.1%	10.8%	10.7%	10.6%
Aboriginal pregnant women	43.3%	48.7%	39.8%	49.8%	41.6%	39.4%	41.9%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	10.1%	8.4%	8.0%	6.5%	6.9%	6.8%	5.9%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

Proportion of women who reported smoking during pregnancy by Aboriginal status, Central Australia, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	22.3%	20.5%	20.0%	21.1%	21.2%	21.4%	23.0%
Aboriginal pregnant women	37.6%	31.7%	32.5%	35.0%	36.4%	37.8%	39.6%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	9.4%	9.2%	8.7%	8.8%	7.0%	7.4%	7.0%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

In Greater Darwin there was a decrease in smoking during pregnancy of 4.1% per year, which was driven by a decrease among non-Aboriginal women of 7.5% per year ($p = 0.003$) but with no evidence of change among Aboriginal women. Among non-Aboriginal women in Central Australia, the proportion of women reporting smoking during pregnancy decreased by an average of 5.4% per year ($p = 0.003$). There was no evidence of change for Aboriginal women in Central Australia.

Reporting trend data is restricted to those regions with estimates based on 20 or more women. When proportions are based on small numbers, there is a large random variation between the years.

3.1.5 Alcohol consumption during pregnancy

Exposure to alcohol during the antenatal period is a major risk for a range of conditions in children. These conditions are collectively referred to as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and can include physical, mental, behavioural and/or learning disabilities.⁽⁶¹⁾

Alcohol can harm the unborn child at any stage in pregnancy and women are advised to avoid alcohol when pregnant or planning to become pregnant.⁽⁶²⁾ Information on the proportion of women who report consuming alcohol is collected twice, during the first trimester as well as during the third trimester.

This measure reports the proportion of babies exposed to alcohol in early pregnancy (first trimester), as a proportion of all births.

Proportion (%) of babies exposed to alcohol in first trimester of pregnancy



Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019. Note: (na) not available.

In the Northern Territory, approximately 5 in 100 babies (4.6%) were exposed to alcohol in the first trimester of pregnancy. The proportion varied across the regions from 2 in 100 babies (2.1%) in East Arnhem and 3 in 100 babies (2.8%) in Greater Darwin to about 11 in 100 babies in Big Rivers (11.4%) and Barkly (10.6%).

This measure is the proportion of babies exposed to alcohol in late pregnancy (third trimester), as a proportion of all births.

Proportion (%) of babies exposed to alcohol in third trimester of pregnancy



Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.
Note: (na) not available.

The proportion of pregnant women reporting consuming alcohol fell substantially between early and late pregnancy across all regions. In the Northern Territory, less than 2 in 100 babies (1.5%) were exposed to alcohol in the third trimester. Across the regions, the lowest proportion was in Greater Darwin, which was less than 1 in 100 babies (0.7%) and highest in the Barkly region with 5 in 100 babies (4.9%).

3.2 Healthy in the first year

The brain of a child grows most rapidly in its first year of life. Good nutrition, physical and mental stimulation, and emotional and practical care at this time are critical in the life of a child. The health of a child in this early stage of life is affected by many factors.

3.2.1 Pre-term births

A pre-term birth is defined as birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy. Pre-term birth is associated with increased risks including long-term neurological disability, re-admission to hospital in the first year of life and perinatal death.⁽⁶³⁾ There are a range of factors that influence the likelihood of pre-term birth, these can include pre-existing medical conditions, emotional health and wellbeing, and environmental factors.⁽⁵⁷⁾

This measure is the number of births before 37 weeks of pregnancy as a proportion of all births.

Proportion (%) of pre-term births (less than 37 weeks)



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

In the Northern Territory, the proportion of babies born pre-term (11.3%) was greater than in Australia (8.7%). Across the Northern Territory, the proportion varied from less than 1 in 10 births (8.5%) in Central Australia to 2 in 10 births (19.5%) in East Arnhem.



Proportion of pre-term births (less than 37 weeks) by maternal Aboriginal status, Northern Territory, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	10.2%	10.6%	10.2%	10.9%	10.9%	11.9%	11.3%
Aboriginal pregnant women	17.5%	16.2%	17.0%	16.9%	17.6%	18.1%	17.6%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	6.9%	7.8%	6.9%	8.0%	7.8%	8.8%	8.1%

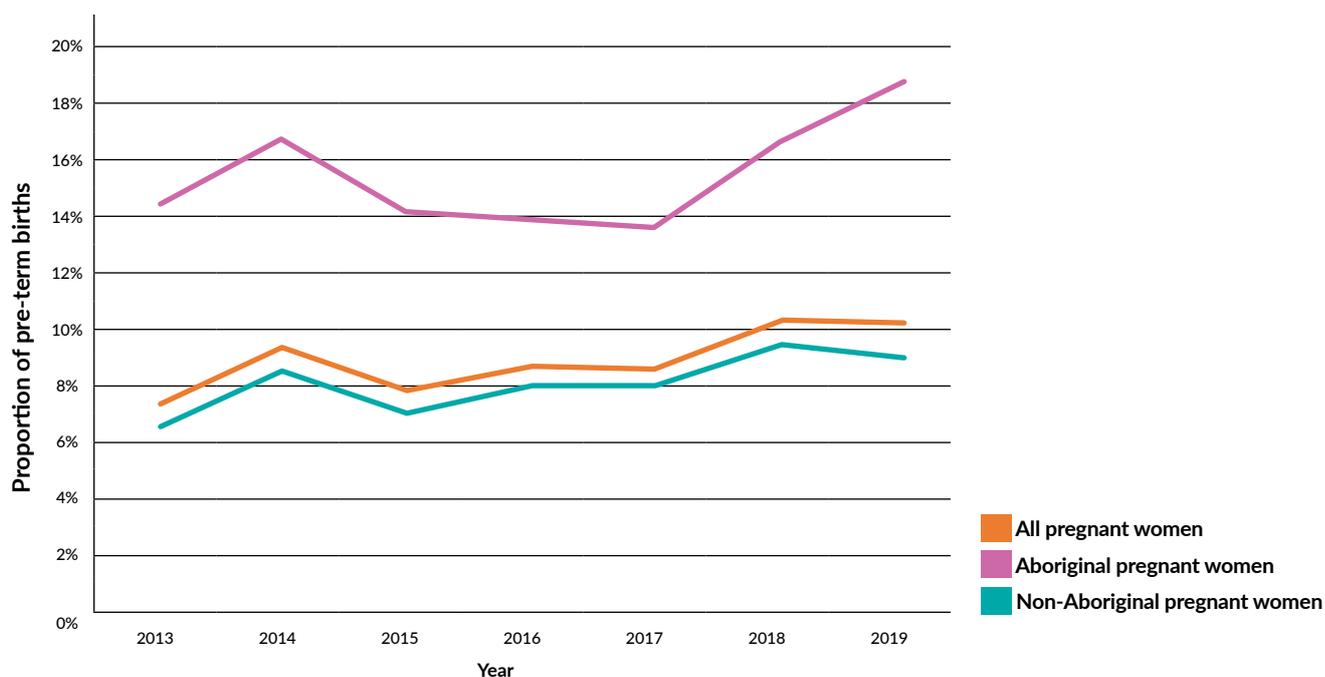
Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.

Over the seven years of available data, from 2013 to 2019, the proportion of pre-term births in the Northern Territory increased by 2.1% each year ($p = 0.02$). In Greater Darwin there was evidence for an annual increase estimated to be 4.7% per year ($p = 0.04$). There has been the suggestion of a decline, by about 4% per year, in pre-term births in Central Australia but the change has been based on a small number of births and does not provide clear evidence for a trend.

Reporting trend data is restricted to those regions with estimates based on 20 or more births because of the large random variation, between years, when proportions are based on small numbers.

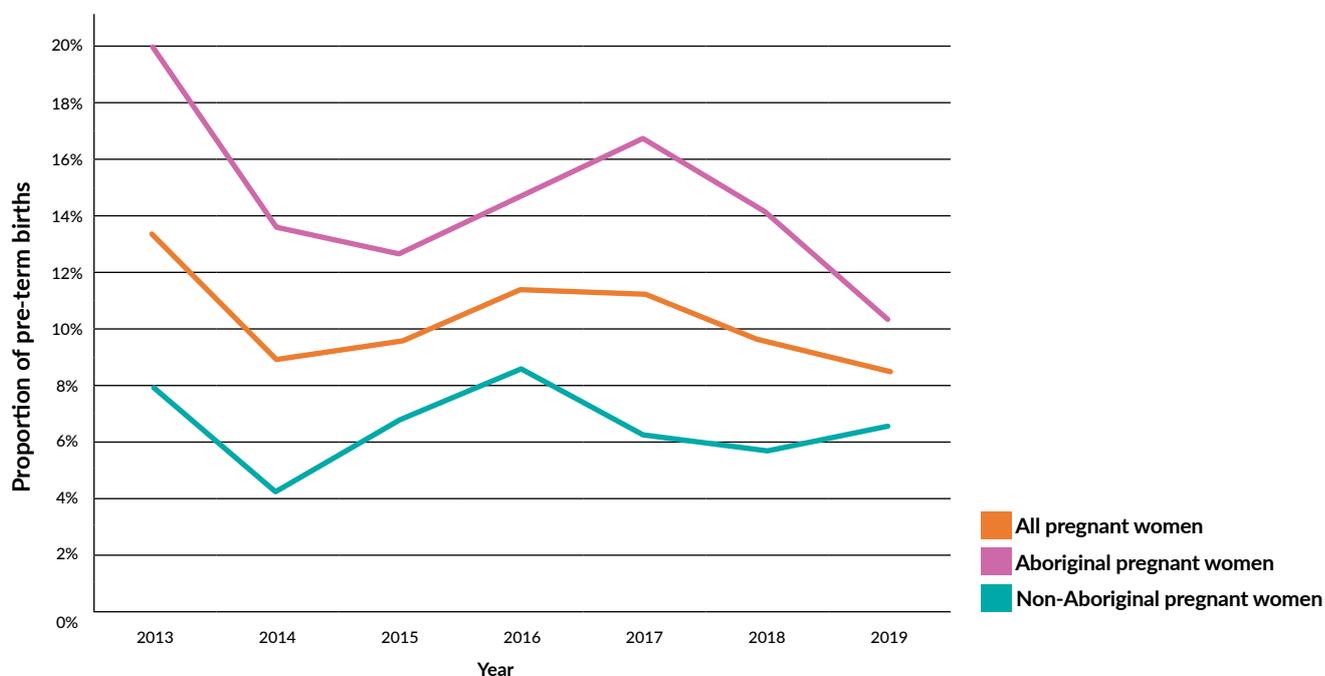


Proportion of pre-term births (less than 37 weeks) by maternal Aboriginal status, Greater Darwin, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	7.3%	9.3%	7.8%	8.6%	8.6%	10.3%	10.2%
Aboriginal pregnant women	14.4%	16.7%	14.1%	13.9%	13.6%	16.6%	18.8%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	6.6%	8.5%	7.0%	8.0%	7.9%	9.5%	8.9%

Proportion of pre-term births (less than 37 weeks) by maternal Aboriginal status, Central Australia, 2013 to 2019



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
All pregnant women	13.4%	8.9%	9.6%	11.4%	11.3%	9.6%	8.5%
Aboriginal pregnant women	19.9%	13.6%	12.7%	14.7%	16.7%	14.2%	10.4%
Non-Aboriginal pregnant women	7.9%	4.2%	6.8%	8.6%	6.3%	5.7%	6.6%

Data source and year: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2013-19.



NWARAN, AN ASTROLOGICAL NAMING CEREMONY

“My name is Manju and I was born in Kathmandu, Nepal. I came to Australia in 2007 and my husband and I have two children. In Nepalese culture we hold an astrological naming ceremony, a ‘Nwaran’, on the 11th day after the birth of a baby. A priest visits the family for the ceremony and family and friends attend, it is quite big.

During the Nwaran, a Hom (meaning fire) is conducted to purify the baby, mother and house. We put ghee on a stick of wood and light it and the priest says a mantra. This is very auspicious and means the family and the house are purified. Bad spirits will be removed from the house.

Nepalese people have two names, their common name and an astrological name. As part of the Nwaran, the priest will look at the time of the birth of the baby and make an astrological horoscope. The China (pronounced ch – e – na), also known as Janma Kundali, is an astrological chart which is prepared based on the date, time and place of a baby’s birth. The chart determines the location of planets, the sun and the moon. This sets out the astrological aspects of a person.

When a child is unwell, the China can be used to determine what has caused the illness. If anything arises for health and wellbeing, for physical and mental health we can look to the astrological reading. If a child is unsettled, we believe there are bad shadows and the Astrologer can look to the China to see the cause and how it can be fixed. My children’s China is with my husband’s family in Nepal.”

Photo: Manju (right) with her mother Mohan (left) and children Nirran and Myra

3.2.2 Low birthweight

The birthweight of a baby is affected by many factors including characteristics of the parents, health of the mother during pregnancy and the length of gestation. The Story is using a definition of low birthweight as less than 2,500 grams, to align with national reporting.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Low birthweight increases the risk of illness and death in infancy.⁽⁵⁾ It is also associated with long-term effects such as poor cognitive development and a higher risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.⁽⁶⁵⁾

This measure is the proportion of babies born with a low birthweight (less than 2,500 g) among live-born singleton babies.

Proportion (%) of babies born with low birthweight (less than 2,500 g)



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018. NT and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2019.

In the Northern Territory, 9 in 100 babies (9.4%) were born with a low birthweight which is greater than the proportion of 7 in 100 babies (6.7%) across Australia. The proportion of babies born with a low birthweight varies across regions from 8 in 100 babies (8.0%) in Greater Darwin to 17 in 100 babies (16.8%) in East Arnhem.

3.2.3 Infant mortality

Infant deaths are those deaths of children from birth and before age 1. During the first four weeks of life, infant deaths are commonly the result of birth-related conditions. After the first four weeks infant deaths are increasingly the result of wider environmental factors such as infection or malnutrition.

Infant mortality rate is the number of deaths of children, under the age of 1, for every 1,000 live births.

Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)

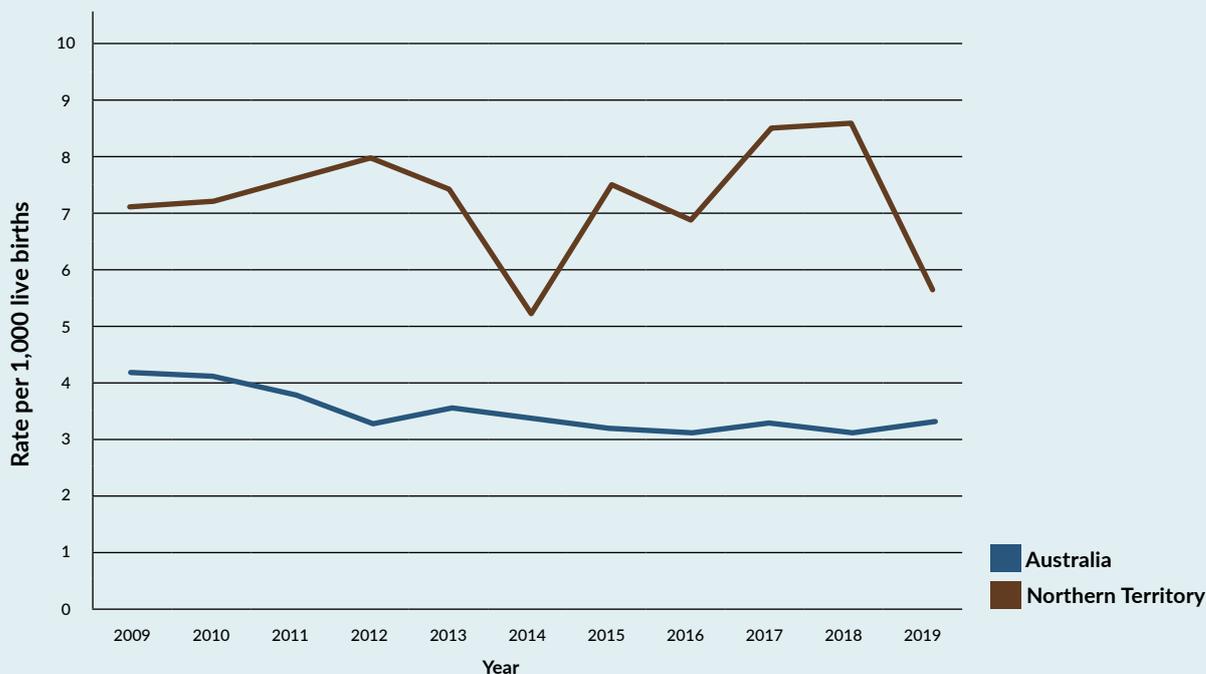


Data source and year: Australian Coordinating Registry, Cause of Death Unit Record Files, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2014-18.

Infant mortality rates in the Northern Territory, between 2014-18, averaged 7.3 deaths per 1,000 live births, which was 2.3 times higher than the Australian rate of 3.2 deaths per 1,000. In Greater Darwin, there were 4.7 deaths per 1,000 live births. The infant mortality rate was more than 10 deaths per 1,000 live births in Top End (10.8), Central Australia (10.9), Big Rivers (11.1) and East Arnhem (11.5).



Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births), Australia and Northern Territory, 2009 to 2019



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Australia	4.2	4.1	3.8	3.3	3.6	3.4	3.2	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.3
Northern Territory	7.1	7.2	7.6	8.0	7.4	5.2	7.5	6.9	8.5	8.6	5.7

Data source: Infant deaths and infant mortality rates, ABS, 2009-19.

Through the eleven-year period, from 2009 to 2019, the infant mortality rate for Australia fell by 2.7% per year ($p = 0.001$). During the same period there was a similar decline, by about 4% per year, in the infant mortality rate in the Northern Territory but this change is based on a small number of deaths and does not provide clear evidence for a trend.

3.2.4 Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding improves the nutritional, physical and psychological wellbeing of the child and mother.^(66, 67) Exclusive breastfeeding is recommended for the first six months of life.⁽⁶⁶⁾ This measure is the proportion of babies exclusively breastfed to 6 months of age.

Proportion (%) of babies exclusively breastfed to 6 months of age (SOF)



Data source and year: 2017-18 National Health Survey and 2018-2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS. Data extracted for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations separately using ABS TableBuilder and combined, 9 August 2021 (special table). Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Survey results for children aged 6 months to 3 years at time of data collection. 3. The 2019 Story reported exclusive breastfeeding to 3 months of age.

In the Northern Territory, more than 4 in 10 babies (43.8) were exclusively breastfed to age 6 months which is greater than the proportion reported for Australia (30.9%).



OUR BUSH MEDICINE

“We have all this bush medicine all around us. In the past, we had lots of old people with us. They told stories about bush medicine. It makes us get well.

Jimijinga (milky plum) is a small tree with long green leaves. It helps with coughs and chest infection. We use it for babies, children, old and middle aged. We crush the leaves, put them in water and boil them up over the fire until the water goes green. We cool the water, remove the leaves and we drink it. The baby drinks it when it is sick and it helps with the coughing. It also helps the baby sleep. Sometimes we grab the leaves and chew it, to extract the juices. This is the one we use all the time.

When a child has scabies or sores, we go down to the beach to get Tarrpilima. The long seed of the mangrove. You see them hanging from the tree and also collect along the beach. We use it to help with children sores. We boil this over the fire and make it soft in the water. The water turns orange. When it is a little bit warm, we bath the babies in the water, from head to toe to remove the infection. This is like a medicine. It works. One or two weeks later they feel better.

When the younger ones need help they come to us old people and we tell them about the Jimijinga and Tarrpilima. They need to know about our way of culture, it is very important. We pass that story to them. It's from the past, and up to us now, who are living.”

Jacinta Tipungwuti with Regina Kantilla,
Wurrumiyanga, Bathurst Island

Photos: Jacinta with the Jimijinga plant and
collecting Tarrpilima on the beach⁽⁷²⁾



3.3 Growing up healthy

As children develop, it is important they are supported to maintain good nutrition, physical, mental and emotional health. The health of children and young people is affected by many factors, both individual and at a community level.

3.3.1 Child immunisation

Vaccinations are highly effective for protecting children against a wide range of potentially harmful diseases. High levels of vaccination in a population are associated with health and socioeconomic benefits.⁽⁶⁸⁾ In Australia, the National Immunisation Program provides a schedule of free vaccinations, recommended at specific ages, across childhood.⁽⁶⁹⁾ Australia has a target of 95% childhood immunisation coverage.^(70, 71) Timely childhood immunisation is measured as the percentage of children who have had all the age-appropriate vaccines by a specific age. High levels and timely immunisation not only protect the individual child but also provide herd immunity to reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases among the population, including those who have not been vaccinated.

This measure is the proportion of children who have received all recommended vaccinations by the age of two.

Proportion (%) of children fully immunised at age two 



Data source and year: Australian Immunisation Register, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2018.

About 9 in 10 children are fully immunised by their second birthday in both the Northern Territory (88.7%) and more generally in Australia (90.7%). The proportion of timely immunisation varies across regions from more than 9 in 10 children (94.1%) in Top End to 8 in 10 children (77.7%) in Barkly.

3.3.2 Bodyweight for children and young people

Children and young people can gain weight quickly. A certain amount of weight gain is needed as they are growing. However, excessive weight gain can lead to an increased risk of health conditions that may continue into adulthood. Weight changes are affected by a variety of factors including physical activity, nutrition, hormonal changes and hereditary influences.⁽⁷³⁾

Body Mass Index or BMI is a measurement derived from the combination of a person's weight and height. BMI provides an indication of whether a person's weight is appropriate relative to their height including whether they are underweight, overweight or obese.

This measure is the number and proportion of children and young people, aged 2-19, with a BMI within the 'overweight' or 'obese' range, as a proportion of all children and young people, aged 2-19, with a self-reported height and weight.

Proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 2-19, who were overweight or obese  



Data source and year: 2017-18 National Health Survey and 2018-2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS. Data extracted for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations separately using ABS TableBuilder and combined, 9 August 2021 (special table). Note: (na) not available.

In the Northern Territory (29.9%) and Australia (29.1%), approximately 3 in 10 children were reported as overweight or obese. Data is not available for the regions.



ATHLETE AND ROLE MODEL

Sherika Mahoney, aged 12, from Alpuurrulam lost her leg when she was six months old. She received her first prosthetic running blade in 2019, and that same year went on to represent her school at the Barkly Region Interschool Athletics Carnival.

After doing well at the regional competition, Sherika was selected to represent the Barkly region at the Northern Territory Athletics Carnival. Sherika was then selected to represent the Northern Territory at the Australian School Sports Athletics Carnival in long jump, 100 metre sprint and the relay event, where she won a gold medal for relay and set School Sports Australia records for long jump and the 100 metre race.

Sherika says when she was competing she felt “really scared then happy after I won.” She encourages other children with disabilities or facing other challenges participating in sport. “They can do anything they want as I have.”

Barkly Sports Education Coordinator, Pam Dillon, says Sherika has become a role model for her peers and inspires them, “They can see that you can go from a little remote school, way out, so far away – and go to national level.”

Sherika was a finalist in the 2021 Northern Territory Young Achiever Awards in recognition for her achievements in sport. She continues to train and says in the future she would like to “do athletics for [the] Australian team”.

Photo: Sherika at the Barkly Athletics Carnival in Tennant Creek, June 2021

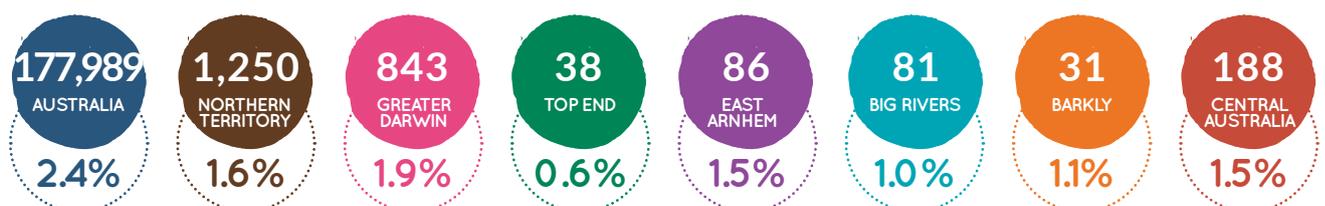
3.3.3 Children and young people with a disability

Disability is defined as needing support to complete daily, core activities.⁽⁷⁵⁾ These activities may include self-care, mobility or communication. If a child or young person is assessed as having a severe or profound disability, this means they require support ‘sometimes or always’.⁽⁷⁵⁾

There are limited sources of data on disability in young people, especially for those living in remote Northern Territory communities. The ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers provides comprehensive data but has limited geographic reach and is therefore not used in this Story.

This measure is the number and proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, who report they have need for assistance with core activities.

Number and proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 0-24, who have need for assistance with core activities



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In the Northern Territory there is a lower proportion of children and young people who have need for assistance with core activities (1.6%) than the Australian average (2.4%). Across the Northern Territory regions, the reported proportion varies from about 1 in 166 children and young people (0.6%) in Top End, to about 1 in 50 children and young people (1.9%) in Greater Darwin.

A NUTRITIOUS DIET – DATA FOCUS

To grow and develop, it is important that children and young people have a balanced and nutritious diet. The Australian Dietary Guidelines provide a series of dietary recommendations including to eat a varied diet which is balanced across five food groups – fruit; vegetables; grains; lean meat, fish, eggs, nuts and beans; and dairy products.⁽⁷⁴⁾ Within each food group there are specific recommendations for the quantity to be eaten each day. The recommendations vary with age and sex. For fruit, the recommended daily intake for all adults is two serves per day and for vegetables, the recommended daily intake for adults is five serves for women and six serves for men.

Information on dietary practices is collected in national ABS health surveys however the diverse and scattered population of the Northern Territory means that caution is required when interpreting survey results for the Northern Territory. For this data focus we have combined information from two surveys to provide estimates for the proportion of children and young people meeting the recommended dietary guidelines.

Among Northern Territory children and young people, aged 2 to 19, we estimate 65.8% meet the dietary guidelines for fruit but only 6.8% meet the guidelines for vegetables. The results are similar to the corresponding result across Australia for fruit intake (68.6%). The low dietary intake of vegetables is also consistent with the corresponding result for Australia (6.0%).

Source: 2017-18 National Health Survey and 2018-2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS. Data extracted using ABS TableBuilder and combined, 9 August 2021 (special table).

3.3.4 Mentally healthy

Being mentally healthy is defined as a state of wellbeing when a child or young person realises their own abilities, demonstrates resilience to the normal stresses of life and can participate in and contribute to their community.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Mental health conditions in childhood can significantly impact wellbeing and have a strong association with mental health-related conditions in adulthood.^(5, 77)

Mental health is a broad concept with many different factors and for which there is no universal definition. People may avoid talking about mental health because of associated stigma or a lack of understanding. Mental health-related conditions are common and only a small proportion of individuals with these conditions are ever admitted to hospital. However, hospital admission records provide a consistent and reliable measure for mental health.

This measure is the number and rate (per 10,000 population) of hospital admissions for mental health-related conditions for young people, aged 15 to 24.

Hospitalisation rate (per 10,000 population) for mental health-related conditions for young people, aged 15-24



Data source and year: Australia: Mental health services in Australia, AIHW, 2018-19. NT and regions: NT Department of Health (special table), 2020; NT and regions rates calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. Australian data is for young people, aged 12-24. 2. NT data include 29 hospitalisations of people who were interstate or overseas residents.

In the Northern Territory in 2020, there were 899 young people admitted to hospital with mental health-related conditions. This is a rate of 268.9 hospitalisations per 10,000 population and is almost five times the rate for Australia (54.1 hospitalisations per 10,000) for young people, aged 12-24. Across the Northern Territory regions, the rate varied from 183.9 hospitalisations per 10,000 in Greater Darwin, to 444.2 hospitalisations per 10,000 in Central Australia.



HEALING ON COUNTRY

Ava, aged 9, has grown up in Kakadu and West Arnhem Land. While Ava has spent most of her life living in Kakadu, her grandmother's country is Marlkawo, a remote part of West Arnhem.

Early this year, Ava was struggling when living in town. She was experiencing emotional, behavioural and physical health challenges. Ava was living in an overcrowded house, had skin sores and showed signs of hypervigilance. She was struggling to focus on her learning.

Ava and her family decided she should return to Marlkawo to be with her grandmother Annie. In Marlkawo, Ava is learning from Annie to ensure she has strong cultural knowledge and understands her responsibilities to family and country. Ava is calm and respectful to her ancestors and demonstrates her care for country.

Annie says, "I was teaching Ava in culture way since she was three years old. We started with bush tucker, picking green plum and billy goat plum. When she came here she could start learning pandanus [for weaving]. And she's got it now! Next, she will learn to collect colour [for dyeing]."

Ava says, "It's very kind of beautiful. It's very comfy and healthy. It helps your body to build relationships with country and look after your country."

Annie is a Senior Leader and Cultural Educator at Children's Ground with family working alongside western-trained staff in learning and health promotion. Ava is learning to have responsibility for her own health and is engaging in cultural and western learning – to be strong in both ways.

Ava has been learning mindfulness strategies and techniques to self-regulate during learning sessions. She particularly enjoys the glitter jars, "Glitter jars are really good. When we shake it, is very beautiful, then we lay down and relax. The glitter goes down and helps your brain get strong."

Within four weeks of arriving in Marlkawo, Ava's skin sores were healing, she was calmer and thriving in her cultural and western learning. Annie shares, "Something has changed, and she is learning. Ava and the other girls help to collect pandanus in the old way."

Photo: Ava and Annie on country at Marlkawo

3.3.5 Smoking prevalence among young people

Tobacco smoking is a leading cause of illness and death in Australia. Tobacco use has been estimated to contribute to the total burden of illness for eight disease groups, including respiratory diseases (41%), cancers (22%) and cardiovascular diseases (6.8%).⁽⁷⁸⁾ As reported earlier in this chapter, smoking in pregnancy is also associated with a range of pregnancy complications.

Information on smoking patterns is collected in national health surveys, however the diverse and scattered population of the Northern Territory means that caution is required when interpreting survey results. The data for this measure has been collated using two surveys to provide estimates for the proportion of young people who are current smokers.

This measure is the proportion of young men and young women, aged 15–24, who are current smokers.

Proportion (%) of young men, aged 15-24, who are current smokers 



Proportion (%) of young women, aged 15-24, who are current smokers 



Data source and year: 2017-18 National Health Survey and 2018-2019 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS. Data extracted for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal populations separately using ABS TableBuilder and combined, 9 August 2021 (special table). Note: (na) not available.

The smoking prevalence for the Northern Territory is much higher than the estimates for young men (18.0%) and young women (10.3%) across Australia. Across the Northern Territory there is a substantial proportion of both young men (46.3%) and young women (24.5%) who are current smokers. The estimate for young women, based on survey data, is consistent with the prevalence of smoking in pregnancy (20.2%), reported from perinatal records presented in this chapter.

3.3.6 Sexually transmissible infections

Sexually transmissible infections (STIs) have an impact on the wellbeing of young people. As young people in the Northern Territory tend to begin their reproductive lives earlier than in other parts of Australia, it is particularly relevant. Young people experience higher rates of STI notifications compared to other age groups.⁽⁷⁹⁾ However, young people also face additional challenges in terms of prevention, treatment and support for STIs due to lack of understanding, fear of stigmatisation and structural barriers to accessing healthcare such as cost.⁽⁸⁰⁾ While data is not available for all STIs, this Story reports the rates of two common diseases, chlamydia and gonorrhoea.

This measure is the number and rate (per 100,000 population) of chlamydia notifications among young people, aged 15-24.

Number and rate (per 100,000 population) of chlamydia notifications among young people, aged 15-24.



Data source and year: Australia: HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia: annual surveillance report 2018, data for 2017. NT and regions: NT Department of Health (special table), 2020; NT rates estimated using ABS Census 2016 data, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table). Note: NT regional data are reported by NT health districts, which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In 2020, there were 1,332 infections of chlamydia among young people in the Northern Territory, at a rate of 3,984.8 per 100,000 population. This rate is more than double the 2017 Australian rate of 1,609.7 per 100,000 population. Across the Northern Territory, the rate of chlamydia notifications among young people varied from 2,674.1 in Greater Darwin, to 5,671.8 in Big Rivers and 7,546.6 in Central Australia.

This measure is the number and rate (per 100,000 population) of gonorrhoea notifications among young people, aged 15-24.

Number and rate (per 100,000 population) of gonorrhoea notifications among young people aged 15-24



Data source and year: Australia: HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible infections in Australia: annual surveillance report 2018, data for 2017. NT and regions: NT Department of Health (special table), 2020; NT rates estimated using ABS Census 2016 data, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table).

Note: NT regional data are reported by NT health districts, which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In 2020, there were 674 infections of gonorrhoea among young people in the Northern Territory, at a rate of 2,016.3 per 100,000 population. This rate is substantially more than the Australian average from 2017, of 266.8 infections per 100,000 population. Across the Northern Territory, the rate of gonorrhoea notifications among young people varied from 365.6 in Greater Darwin, to 3,642.7 in Barkly and 7,360.7 in Central Australia.

3.3.7 Death of children and young people

Understanding the causes of death in a population is important as it can inform policy development and prevention strategies. The main causes of death in Australia differ across age groups.

For children aged 1-14, land transport accidents such as car crashes are the leading cause of death. For young people, aged 15-24, suicide is the leading cause of death and land transport accidents the second most common cause of death.⁽⁸¹⁾

This measure is the annual number of deaths of children, aged 1-14, per 100,000 population.

Death rate (per 100,000 population) for children, aged 1-14



Data source and year: ABS 3303.0 Causes of Death, 2019.

Note: 1. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 2. ABS rates are based on preliminary death data and are subject to revision.

This measure is the annual number of deaths of young people, aged 15-24, per 100,000 population.

Death rate (per 100,000 population) for young people, aged 15-24



Data source and year: ABS 3303.0 Causes of Death, 2019.

Note: 1. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 2. ABS rates are based on preliminary death data and are subject to revision.

In 2019, the Northern Territory death rate for children aged 1-14 was 32.5 per 100,000 population, which was more than three times greater than the corresponding rate for Australia. In the same year, the Northern Territory death rate for young people aged 15-24 was 119.0 per 100,000 population. This rate was also close to three times greater than the corresponding rate for Australia.



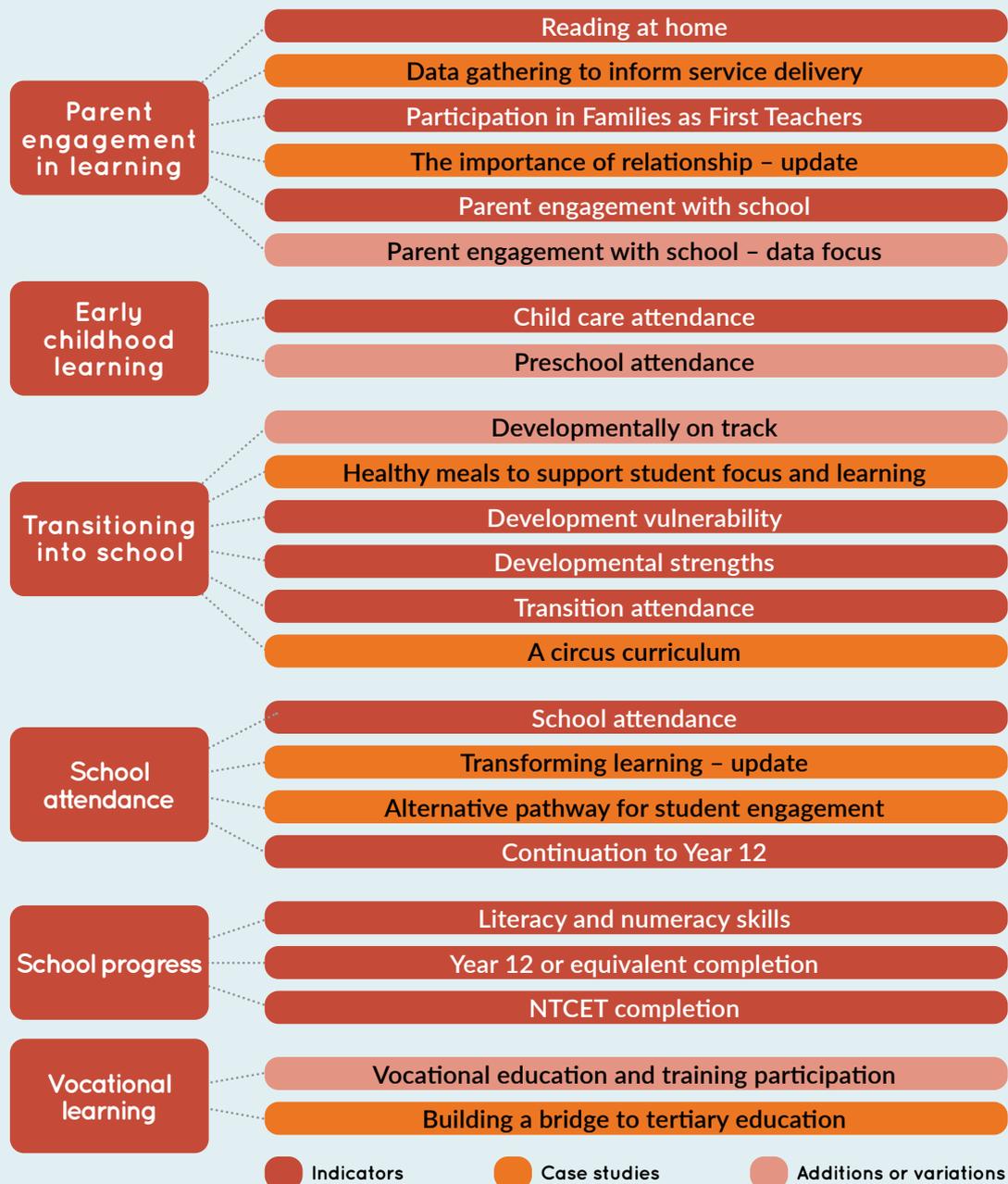
Domain 4

Learning

Children and young people are constantly learning as they grow and develop. Learning takes place in many ways, at home with family, through interaction with the wider community and in formal settings, like schools.

Formal educational attainment is a vital foundation to enable young people to achieve their goals and access further opportunities through life. While most indicators reported in this chapter are focused on formal learning, learning is not just about study at school, it is about all the experiences in the life of a child and young person. It is important that children and young people are supported throughout their learning journey.

In this domain, six outcomes of parent engagement in learning, early childhood learning, transitioning into school, school attendance, school progress and vocational learning are explored through 15 indicators, one data focus and seven case studies:



There are a number of developments, from the 2019 Story, in the indicators for the learning domain. A measure of developmentally 'on track' has been added, as an additional indicator for transitioning to school, to be consistent with national reporting of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC). Regional information on child care attendance and the proportion of children attending preschool has been added. There has also been a refinement in the measure for preschool attendance to now report the proportion of children attending a preschool program for 15 hours or more, to be consistent with national reporting. In this Story there is also new information on parent engagement with school, presented as a data focus and reporting results from a school survey. A measure of vocational education and training participation has also been added.

When comparing the data in the 2021 Story with the 2019 Story, change is suggested in a number of measures. The number of Families as First Teachers (FaFT) centres has increased with more children attending and with higher average attendance. Continuation to Year 12, as measured by the apparent retention rate, has improved in the Northern Territory. However, caution is required when making comparison using only two data points and over a short period. Trend data using multiple data points provides a more reliable assessment of change.

Trend data has been added for two key indicators: Year 7 school attendance and apparent retention rate from Year 7 to Year 12. Over the eight years of available data, school attendance for Year 7 students in Northern Territory Government schools has declined. The apparent retention from Year 7 to Year 12 is reported for five years and suggests some recent improvement however this change is not yet sufficiently sustained to confirm a long-term change. Further interpretation of these trends can be found in the chapter.

4.1 Parent engagement in learning

It is widely recognised that when parents are engaged in their child's learning, children are more likely to succeed at school. Parents can be involved in many ways, including reading to their child at home, supporting their child to participate in educational activities outside of formal school, linking what children learn at school to what happens elsewhere and being an active part of the school community.⁽⁸²⁾ The measures detailed in 4.1.1-4.1.3 measure parent engagement in the early years. There is an absence of reliable data for parent engagement in the learning of older children and young people.

4.1.1 Reading at home

Reading at home helps children practice and develop their reading and language skills. Children whose parents read to them frequently in early childhood are shown to do better in reading assessments later in school.⁽⁸³⁾ The AEDC is a nationwide survey of how young children are developing and their readiness for formal schooling as they begin their first year of full-time school. Teachers complete a questionnaire based on their knowledge and observation of the children in their class. The AEDC has been completed every three years from 2009 to 2018.⁽⁸⁴⁾ Data collection for the latest census was conducted in Term 2, 2021 and will be available in 2022.

In the AEDC, teachers are asked 'Would you say this child is regularly read to/encouraged in his/her reading at home?'

This measure is the proportion of children whose teachers report they are regularly read to or are encouraged to read at home, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children who are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

In the Northern Territory, more than 7 in 10 children (73.1%) are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home. Across the regions there is substantial variation in this measure with almost 9 in 10 children (86.1%) in Greater Darwin, and about 3 in 10 children (33.7%) in Barkly regularly read to or encouraged to read at home.



DATA GATHERING TO INFORM SERVICE DELIVERY

As part of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Return to Country program encouraged people to return from urban areas to their country. In Tennant Creek, community organisations realised that to facilitate this program they needed a better understanding of who was living in the town's Community Living Areas (CLAs).

There are challenges with maintaining accurate demographic data, given the most recent census was conducted in 2016. Julalikari Community Connectors and Connected Beginnings backbone team partnered to address this gap with an audit of households in the seven CLAs in Tennant Creek. The Connected Beginnings backbone team were also interested in accurate data about the numbers of families with children who lived in the CLAs, to support their engagement with early years services.

Staff from both organisations were trained and mentored in data collection and analysis. Over one month, the team, working in pairs, surveyed every household in the seven CLAs.

Along with informing the efforts to safely return people to country and protect against the risk of COVID-19, the data collection produced other valuable insights.

The survey found of a population of 624, a high proportion (30.8%) were children, aged 0-17. The survey revealed low early childhood education attendance with 20 out of 87 children, aged 0-5, regularly attending an early learning program.

As a result of this increased understanding of the population's needs, follow up visits were organised to support a small group of families to ensure child immunisations were up to date, birth certificates obtained and full health checks and enrolment forms completed. 'Ready for preschool packs' were developed and used by 50 children. There were an additional 10 new preschool enrolments in Term 1, 2021 from these families.

"This project demonstrates how good data and a comprehensive understanding of the population can help inform service delivery and ensure targeted approaches meet community needs," Deborah Hartman, Connected Beginnings.

Photo: Ingrid Williams from the Connected Beginnings backbone team with Nellie Morrison from Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation visiting families

4.1.2 Participation in Families as First Teachers

There are a number of early childhood and family support programs operating in the Northern Territory. Families as First Teachers (FaFT) is one of these programs. The aim of the program is to improve developmental outcomes for children by working with families and children, aged 0-4, prior to school entry.⁽⁸⁵⁾ It is based on the Abecedarian approach; an evidence-based method of child education that emphasises the role of young children as active learners and the importance of family involvement in all aspects of a child's learning and development. There are four key elements to the Abecedarian approach: language priority, learning games, conversational reading and enriched caregiving.⁽⁸⁶⁾

Other early childhood and family support programs include Families and Schools Together and independent play groups. There is no data source available to measure Territory-wide participation in these programs.

This is a composite measure and includes: number of communities which have an established and operational FaFT program; the number of children who have attended FaFT at least once during a 12-month period; and, average number of days of participation for children in a 12-month period.

Participation in Families as First Teachers program (SOF)

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
Number of communities	na	55	4	12	10	13	8	8
Number of children	na	2,844	531	431	529	711	385	318
Average days for children	na	19.6	11.2	19.0	28.0	21.8	16.3	15.7

Data source and year: Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020. Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Children can attend multiple FaFT program sites during the year; each child is counted once in a region and once in the NT total. 3. The average days is the average number of days each child attended over the reporting period.

The number of communities in the Northern Territory with FaFT grew from 39 in 2018 to 55 in 2020. Top End, Big Rivers and Central Australia each have an additional four participating communities. The number of children participating in FaFT has also increased, from 2,633 in 2018 to 2,844 in 2020. For children who attend FaFT the average days of participation has increased from 19 days in 2018 to 20 days in 2020.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP – UPDATE



COVID-19 restrictions impacted the delivery of the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program in Elliott in 2020. Attendance dropped and some families moved away. Since the end of 2020, FaFT has been focusing on bringing the program to family homes or other areas in the community, to engage and support families in a way which is easier for them. The team have also begun an outreach program in the school of a nearby community, Newcastle Waters, for one day a week.

Photo: FaFT and pre-school children learning together

4.1.3 Parent engagement with school

Parent or caregiver engagement with a child's school helps the transition of the child into school and reinforces the value of school-based learning. School-based engagement can include activities such as volunteering at the school, direct contact with the child's teacher or visiting the classroom. Involvement of parents or caregivers in these types of activities is shown to have a positive influence on a child's self-regulated learning and later academic achievement.⁽⁸⁷⁾

This measure is the proportion of children whose teachers report that their parents or caregivers are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children whose parents or caregivers are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning **(SOF)**



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

In the Northern Territory, parents are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning for about 8 in 10 children (85.3%), which is less than the proportion of children across Australia (93.7%). Across the regions parent support for their child's learning varies from more than 9 in 10 children in Greater Darwin (92.9%) to almost 7 in 10 children in Barkly (67.5%), Big Rivers (67.9%) and Top End (69.8%).

PARENT ENGAGEMENT WITH SCHOOL – DATA FOCUS

There is limited information about parent/caregiver engagement during their child's primary and secondary years. The Northern Territory Government's annual School Perception Survey (the survey) asks parents to respond to a variety of questions to understand their views of their child's school and of their child's learning.

A total of 5,536 parents/caregivers responded to the survey in 2020, which represents about a quarter of all children attending government schools. The largest proportion of respondents (43.3%) were parents/caregivers of children in the early years of schooling. The survey includes questions for parents to rate items on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Among responding parents, 8 in 10 parents (80.3%) agreed or strongly agreed they were well informed about what was happening at the school, and over 7 in 10 parents (76.1%) agreed or strongly agreed the school works with them to support their child's learning. A lower proportion, about 6 in 10 parents (59.8%), agreed or strongly agreed they have opportunities to have a say in the direction of the school and its education programs.

Data source and year: NT School Perception Survey 2020, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.



4.2 Early childhood learning

It is essential for children to participate and engage in learning from a young age. Learning can take many different forms. Structured learning like formal child care programs as well as more informal learning through play and socialising, are both important for a child's development.

4.2.1 Child care attendance

Child care can be informal, such as children being cared for by family and friends, or formal such as at child care centres. Attending child care of any form exposes children to new environments and assists with early childhood development. In the absence of reliable data on informal child care arrangements, this Story reports on formal, approved child care services. Availability of child care services, particularly in remote areas or areas with small populations, can impact attendance.

For this measure, an approved child care means a service approved by the Australian Government to receive the Child Care Subsidy on behalf of families. Most child care services are approved and include Centre Based Day Care, and Before and After School Hours Care.^(88, 89) Family Day Care and In Home Care are not represented in the data for this measure. The distribution of approved child care services is market-driven and varies across the Northern Territory, with limited services in remote areas.

This measure is the number of children, aged 0-5, who attended at least one session of care at a Child Care Subsidy approved child care in the December quarter, as a proportion of the estimated population of children in the respective area.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 0-5, attending approved child care **(SOF)**



Data source and year: Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table), December quarter 2020; Australian proportion estimated using ABS, 3101.0 Australian Demographic Statistics, 2019; NT proportions estimated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

Note: The data counts the unique children in a region, so if a child attended child care services in multiple regions in the quarter then they would be counted once in each of the relevant regions.

In the Northern Territory, about 1 in 3 children (31.9%), aged 0-5, attended at least one session of care at an approved child care in the last quarter of 2020. This is less than the Australian average of 4 in 10 children (41.8%). There is considerable variation across the regions, with almost 1 in 2 children (44.8%) in Greater Darwin attending child care, and less than 1 in 20 children attending child care in Top End (5.2%).



4.2.2 Preschool attendance

Preschool programs are services which deliver 'a structured, play-based learning program, delivered by a qualified teacher, aimed at children in the year or two before they commence full-time schooling'.⁽⁸⁸⁾ Preschool can help children develop the skills they will need to begin formal education, such as controlling impulsivity, expressing their thoughts and concentrating.⁽⁹⁰⁾ Children who attend preschool have better developmental outcomes by the time they enter their first year of school than those who do not attend preschool.⁽⁹¹⁾

Preschool attendance is not compulsory in the Northern Territory however is highly recommended. Children can attend preschool at age four.⁽⁹²⁾ Most preschool programs are provided through government schools and are free of charge. Preschools on average provide a minimum of 15 hours per week for 40 weeks per year. It is an Australian Government priority, as part of the National Partnership Agreements on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education, to ensure all children have access to a minimum of 600 hours of preschool per year as this is widely agreed to be the minimum amount needed for children to experience educational, social and developmental benefits.^(93, 94)

The Northern Territory's Preschool Curriculum is framed around five key areas: identity, connectedness, wellbeing, learning and thinking, and communication.⁽⁹⁵⁾ These measures include both Northern Territory Government and Catholic preschool programs. Centre-based day care which offer a preschool program delivered by a qualified worker are not included.

This measure is the proportion of children, aged 4, attending a school-based preschool program.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 4, attending a preschool program



Data source and year: Age Grade Census, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020; proportions estimated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Data include NT Government and Catholic schools only and does not include preschool programs provided at centre-based care by a qualified worker.

In 2020, more than 8 in 10 Northern Territory children, aged four (83.9%), attended a preschool program. Across the Northern Territory regions the proportion of children, aged four, attending a preschool program varied from almost 5 in 10 children (48.6%) in Barkly to more than 9 in 10 children (94.0%) in Greater Darwin.

This measure is the proportion of children, aged 4, attending a preschool program for 15 hours or more per week, out of all children attending a preschool program.

Proportion of children, aged 4, attending a preschool program for 15 hours or more



Data source and year: Age Grade Census, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Data include NT Government and Catholic schools only and does not include preschool programs provided at centre-based care by a qualified worker.

Almost 8 in 10 of Northern Territory children, aged four, attending a preschool program, attended for the preferred minimum amount of 15 hours or more a week in 2020. Attendance also varied across the Northern Territory, with more than 4 in 10 children (44.2%) in Top End attending for 15 or more hours a week, up to more than 8 in 10 children in Greater Darwin (84.0%) and Central Australia (83.4%).

4.3 Transitioning into school

Starting school is an important milestone in a child's life and it can be challenging for families to navigate the changes. Shifting from the home environment to a formal education setting requires children to learn new skills which are crucial for their ongoing development and educational and social outcomes. This can include things like following instructions, learning routines and socialising with a wider group of peers and adults.

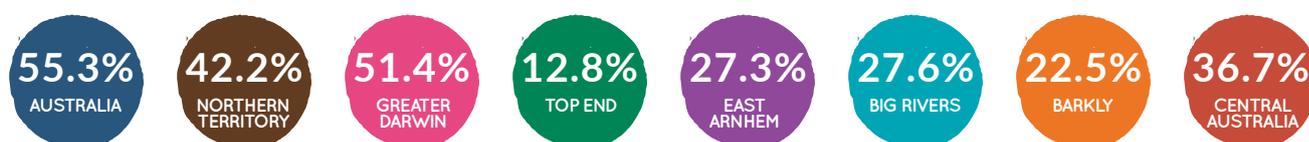
4.3.1 Developmentally on track

The AEDC measures the early development of children aged 5 across five key domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge. A child's scores in each domain can be classified as 'on track', 'developmentally at risk' or 'developmentally vulnerable'. Scores for children who participated in the first AEDC survey, in 2009, are used as a standard reference population.

Children are considered developmentally 'on track' if they score in the top 75% of the scores for the reference population in a domain.⁽⁹⁶⁾

This measure is the proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains  



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

In the Northern Territory, about 4 in 10 children (42.2%) are developmentally on track in all five domains. Across the regions the proportions vary from about 1 in 2 in Greater Darwin (51.4%) to about 1 in 8 in Top End (12.8%).





HEALTHY MEALS TO SUPPORT STUDENT FOCUS AND LEARNING

The School Nutrition Program was established by the Commonwealth Government in 2007 to improve school attendance, engagement and learning by providing healthy, nutritious meals (breakfast, morning tea and lunch) to children enrolled in selected schools from Transition to Year 12. The program also aims to provide employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people.

In Elliott, 250 km north of Tennant Creek, the program is delivered by Saltbush Social Enterprises at the Elliott School. Meals are provided to about 65 students, 98% of whom identify as Aboriginal. Families are encouraged to contribute financially towards the cost of the meals.

Kevin Gaskin, Elliott School Principal said, “The program supports our school to create a teaching and learning environment which enables our students to be healthy, happy, engaged and successful. The prepared meals give students the energy to actively engage in their learning throughout the school day.”

In 2017, an independent evaluation of the program conducted by Menzies School of Health Research found it was considered by community members and stakeholders across the Northern Territory to be a valuable program which had positive impacts for children, families and the wider community.⁽⁹⁷⁾

Jun Zhang, the Program Coordinator at Saltbush said, “The program has seen a positive impact on the wider community in regard to making healthy nutrition choices.” The evaluation identified this benefit, saying it had found the program had reinforced social and life skills.

The evaluation determined the benefits of the program extended beyond its primary objectives, by taking pressure off families and the community, being integrated with and supporting the school curriculum, providing health and behavioural outcomes, and by ensuring children receive appropriate food.

Photo: Abbey at Elliott School enjoying morning tea

4.3.2 Developmental vulnerability

Children are considered 'developmentally vulnerable' if they score in the lowest 10% of the scores for the reference population in a domain. This means that they demonstrate much lower than average ability in the developmental competencies in that domain.⁽⁹⁶⁾

This measure is the proportion of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains

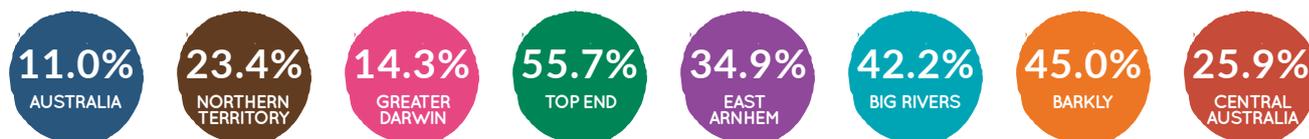


Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

In 2018 in Australia, about 1 in 5 children (21.6%) were developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. In the Northern Territory in the same year the proportion was higher with about 1 in 3 children (35.8%) developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains. Across the regions the proportions vary from 1 in 4 children (25.5%) in Greater Darwin to 7 in 10 children (70.3%) in Top End.

This measure is the proportion of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

In 2018 in the Northern Territory, about 1 in 4 children (23.4%) were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains, which is greater than the proportion of about 1 in 10 children (11.0%) across Australia. Across the regions the proportions vary from 1 in 7 children (14.3%) in Greater Darwin to over half of children (55.7%) in Top End.



4.3.3 Developmental strengths

The Multiple Strengths Indicator (MSI) was developed in 2017 to complement the existing AEDC measures of vulnerability with a strength-based view of early childhood development.⁽⁹⁸⁾ The MSI uses the same Early Development Instrument used in the AEDC and has 39 items. Children are classified into three categories based on their scores: highly developed strengths (scoring 28-39 of the multiple strength indicator items), well developed strengths (19-27) or emerging strengths (18 or less). If a child has highly developed strengths they are showing strengths in areas such as: relating to peers and teachers, self-control, curiosity about the world and reading and writing simple words.⁽⁹⁹⁾

This measure is the proportion of children assessed as having either highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths using the Multiple Strengths Indicator, out of all children captured in the AEDC.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as having highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths using Multiple Strengths Indicator 

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
Highly developed strengths	57.6%	43.8%	50.9%	14.5%	31.6%	32.5%	25.0%	42.9%
Well developed strengths	21.8%	21.6%	22.8%	18.1%	17.5%	19.3%	20.0%	21.2%
Emerging strengths	20.6%	34.6%	26.3%	67.9%	50.9%	47.9%	55.0%	35.9%

Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census, prepared by Australian Department of Education, Skills and Employment (special table extracted on 6 October 2021), 2018.

In 2018 across the Northern Territory, there were varying distributions of children who had highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths. Across the regions the proportion of children with highly developed strengths varied from 1 in 2 children (50.9%) in Greater Darwin to 1 in 7 children (14.5%) in Top End.

4.3.4 Transition attendance

In the Northern Territory, Transition refers to the first year of full-time schooling completed at primary school for children aged about 5, before they commence Year 1 at age 6. It is not compulsory for children to attend Transition, however it is recommended to help children adjust to the requirements of formal schooling.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾

This measure is the proportion of school sessions Transition students attend, out of the school sessions they are expected to attend, in Northern Territory Government schools.

School attendance in Transition  



Data source and year: Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data reporting period covers weeks 1 to 4 and weeks 5 to 8 of each term in a calendar year.

3. Data include NT Government schools only.

In 2020, attendance in Transition was highest in Greater Darwin, with attendance of 9 in 10 sessions (89.8%). In Barkly, Transition students attended less than half (45.3%) of the expected sessions.





A CIRCUS CURRICULUM

The circus program at Ludmilla Primary School was introduced after teachers recognised some students were not thriving in mainstream classes. The school wanted to find a way to strengthen their engagement and to involve students more positively in school. And so, in 2017, in partnership with Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, a circus program was developed.

The program started with circus skills being taught one day per week to students from Transition to Year 6. After seeing a positive impact on participating students, the school formalised the circus program's links with the health, physical education and arts curriculums. The development of a circus curriculum worked towards achieving learning outcomes across physical education and the performing arts as well as strengthening students' social and emotional wellbeing, skill development and connection to learning.

Ludmilla Primary School Principal Carol Putica said, "The children appreciate that persistence, cooperation, and a commitment to accuracy are central to the circus program. These qualities are helping all aspects of our students' learning. For some, it is the first time they've linked effort to results."

The program demonstrates an innovative approach to curriculum delivery. Over time, students have developed an enthusiasm for learning, also improving outcomes in other areas of their schooling – positive health, improvement to physical health and creative outcomes. Together, Corrugated Iron teaching artists and Ludmilla Primary School teachers have developed and documented an annual plan for the program which aims to build capacity of staff to become co-deliverers of the program.

Photo: Students participating in the circus program

4.4 School attendance

Education has a significant impact on people’s long-term social and economic circumstances. School helps to provide children and young people with the skills they need to achieve their goals and take advantage of future opportunities. Attendance is one way of measuring children and young people’s engagement with schooling. It can be hard for children to catch up on educational opportunities that they miss while absent from school, particularly for younger children who may not have the ability to study independently.

4.4.1 School attendance

In the Northern Territory, it is compulsory for children to attend school from age 6 to 17.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ For this Story, attendance of 80% is used as a threshold at or above which children will generally keep up with classroom learning.

Improving low school attendance among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is recognised as a national priority. In 2014, the Council of Australian Governments set a target of meeting the average 93% attendance of non-Indigenous children for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.⁽¹⁰²⁾ The latest Closing the Gap report shows there has been no progress in closing the gap in attendance between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.⁽²⁾

This measure is the proportion of time Year 3 and Year 7 students attend school, out of the time they are expected to attend school, Northern Territory Government schools.

School attendance in Year 3



School attendance in Year 7



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, website, 2019. NT and regions: Enrolment and Attendance, prepared by the NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. Data include NT Government schools only. 2. NT data reporting period covers weeks 1 to 4 and weeks 5 to 8 of each term in a calendar year.

In 2020, the average school attendance for Year 3 (primary school) and Year 7 (middle school) in the Northern Territory was about 8 in 10 sessions (80.2% and 80.4%), which is less than the Australian average of about 9 in 10 sessions (92.7% and 91.9%). In Year 3, average school attendance ranged from 55.8% in Barkly and 56.1% in Top End to 91.5% in Greater Darwin. The distribution for Year 7 was similar, and ranged from 45.3% in Top End and 48.2% in Barkly to 87.5% in Greater Darwin.

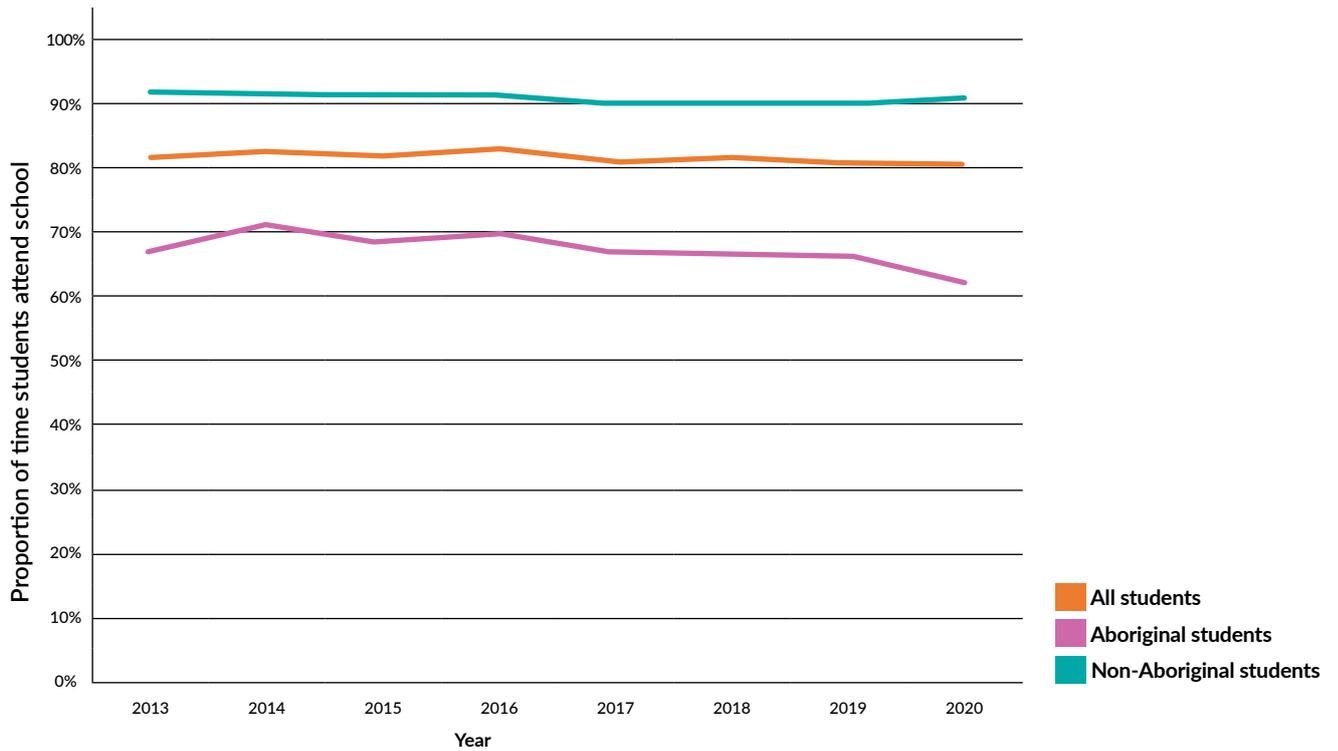


TRANSFORMING LEARNING – UPDATE

Sadadeen Primary School has maintained their child centred framework and is achieving positive outcomes for their students. From 2019 to 2021, there was a decline in major behavioural incidents by 50%. One teacher shared that they are “teaching now, (it is) not just behaviour management.”

Photo: Principal Donna Wright with students Lani (left) and Myraleigh

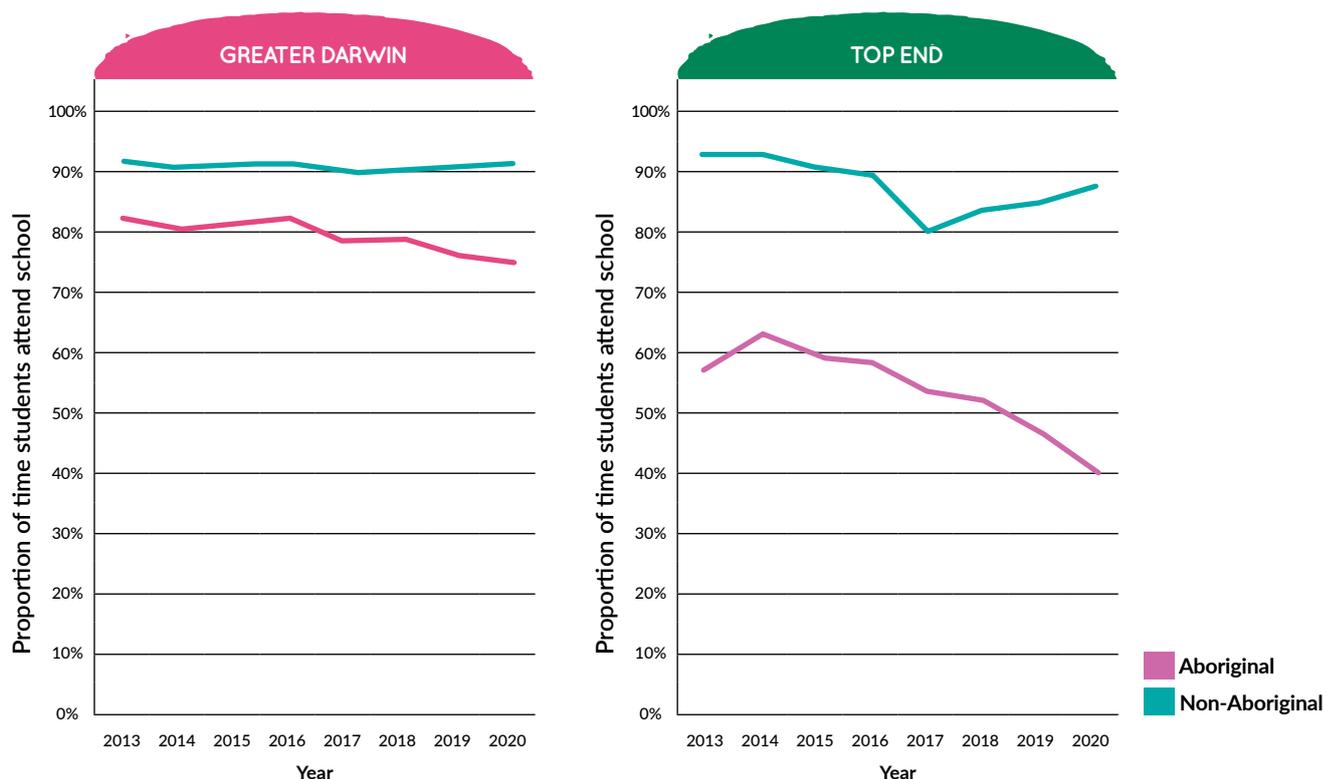
Year 7 school attendance by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory, 2013 to 2020



Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All students	81.3%	82.5%	81.7%	82.8%	80.7%	81.3%	80.4%	80.4%
Aboriginal students	67.2%	70.5%	68.6%	69.4%	67.2%	66.5%	65.9%	62.4%
Non-Aboriginal students	91.6%	91.0%	91.2%	91.1%	89.9%	90.1%	89.9%	90.7%

Over the eight years of available data, from 2013 to 2020, Year 7 school attendance for Aboriginal students declined by 1.2% per year ($p = 0.027$). There is also evidence for a small decline in Year 7 attendance among non-Aboriginal students, by 0.2% each year ($p = 0.041$). Overall, Year 7 students attending school had a slight decline of 0.3% each year ($p = 0.077$).

Year 7 school attendance by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory regions, 2013 to 2020



Year 7 school attendance by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory regions, 2013-2020



Data source and year: Enrolment and Attendance, prepared by the NT Department of Education (special table), 2013-20. Note: New enrolment and attendance processes were introduced in 2013 and therefore enrolment and attendance data prior to 2013 cannot be compared to 2013 or onwards.

Year 7 school attendance by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory regions, 2013-2020

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
GREATER DARWIN	Aboriginal students	82.5%	81.1%	81.9%	82.6%	78.8%	79.1%	75.1%
	Non-Aboriginal students	91.9%	90.9%	91.2%	91.5%	90.3%	90.7%	91.3%
TOP END	Aboriginal students	57.7%	62.8%	59.6%	57.8%	53.9%	46.8%	40.8%
	Non-Aboriginal students	92.7%	93.0%	90.7%	89.9%	80.3%	83.9%	87.6%
EAST ARNHEM	Aboriginal students	52.7%	53.5%	51.6%	51.1%	48.0%	50.9%	43.6%
	Non-Aboriginal students	91.3%	93.1%	90.3%	90.9%	91.0%	87.9%	89.5%
BIG RIVERS	Aboriginal students	62.6%	72.3%	69.1%	66.6%	61.6%	59.2%	52.2%
	Non-Aboriginal students	88.8%	91.8%	91.4%	89.3%	90.2%	81.9%	87.9%
BARKLY	Aboriginal students	72.5%	64.2%	63.7%	56.2%	59.4%	49.6%	45.2%
	Non-Aboriginal students	91.5%	86.5%	90.2%	86.4%	81.0%	86.5%	77.8%
CENTRAL AUSTRALIA	Aboriginal students	62.5%	69.4%	71.2%	68.6%	68.0%	62.2%	60.0%
	Non-Aboriginal students	88.5%	90.5%	90.4%	87.9%	82.7%	86.3%	83.9%

In the Northern Territory regions, there is evidence of a decline in Year 7 school attendance over the eight years of available data for some groups of children. Over this time, the Year 7 school attendance by Aboriginal students decreased, on average, by 1.3% per year in Greater Darwin ($p = 0.002$), 4.9% per year in Top End ($p = 0.005$), 2.0% per year in East Arnhem ($p = 0.029$) and 5.6% per year in Barkly ($p < 0.001$). Among non-Aboriginal students, there was evidence for an average annual decrease of 1.6% per year in Barkly ($p = 0.037$) and 1.0% per year in Central Australia ($p = 0.038$).

This measure is the proportion of all Preschool to Year 12 students, with 80 per cent or more school attendance, out of the time they are expected to attend school, Northern Territory Government schools.

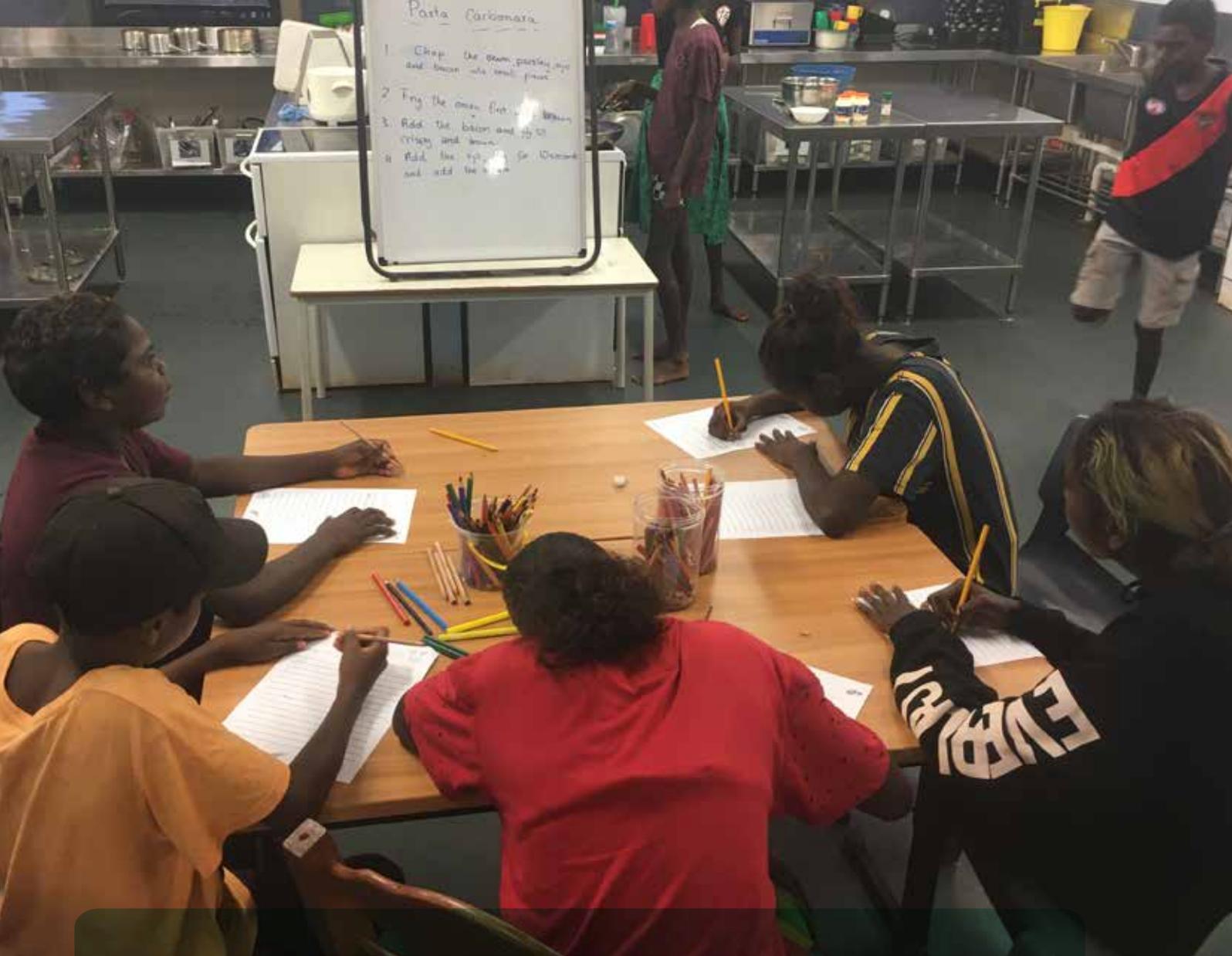
Proportion (%) of all Preschool to Year 12 students, with 80% or more school attendance



Data source and year: Enrolment and Attendance, prepared by the NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Students who are passive at the end of the reporting period are excluded from this report. 3. Students can attend multiple school sites during the year; however, each student is only counted once in each region and total. 4. Data include NT Government schools only.

In 2020, less than 6 in 10 Northern Territory students (56.1%) attended school for 80% or more of the available time. Across the Northern Territory regions, attendance varied substantially from less than 2 in 10 students (17.0%) in Barkly to 3 in 4 students (76.2%) in Greater Darwin attending school for more than 80% of the time.



ALTERNATIVE PATHWAY FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

“It’s not just about education, it’s about wellbeing.” Garrawurra Danny Dungadunga and Alex Hortle are part of the Outreach Team from Shepherdson College, Galiwin’ku who developed an after hours program in 2019 aimed at engaging children not attending school.

The school’s leadership had noticed there were a lot of children in the community not engaged in the school. The ‘Sunset’ program, initially targeted at teenagers, was established at a time (4-8pm) which worked better for them. It began once a week with about 15 children, and later progressed to five days a week.

The program aims to increase student engagement with learning and build confidence and healthy relationships to support student wellbeing in class. The agenda is student-led and the focus is on allowing students to direct their own learning. Alex says, “While most kids love to learn, some struggle with being taught. To engage these students, we try to hide our teaching in the activities kids love. When the kids feel comfortable in the group and excited about the activity, they pretty much teach themselves.”

About ten organisations partner with the school to run one or two activities each evening. The regular program involves cooking, sports and music with other activities including hunting trips, dance workshops and making coffee at the Sunset Café. Community members are supportive and have stepped into mentoring roles.

Listening to student needs and ideas is crucial to them engaging with the school and building stronger relationships with educators. Garrawurra Danny says, “The students can feel confidence through this program, yaka humiliating ga yaka embarrassing, just so they will feel very proud and strong and that’s going to lead them to better learning and education.”

Photo: Students participating in the ‘sunset’ program

4.4.2 Continuation to Year 12

The Story uses Year 7 as a marker of the start of secondary school to align with national reporting standards, as the year level when students begin secondary school varies across Australia.⁽¹⁰³⁾

In the Northern Territory, students are in middle school for Years 7-9, and high school for Years 10-12. It is important to note the retention rate may not accurately reflect all students who have completed Year 12 within either regions or at Northern Territory level. Students may travel to attend school, including to interstate schools.

This measure is the proportion of students enrolled in Year 12, out of all students enrolled in the corresponding cohort in Year 7, for Northern Territory Government and Catholic schools.

Apparent retention from Year 7 to Year 12  



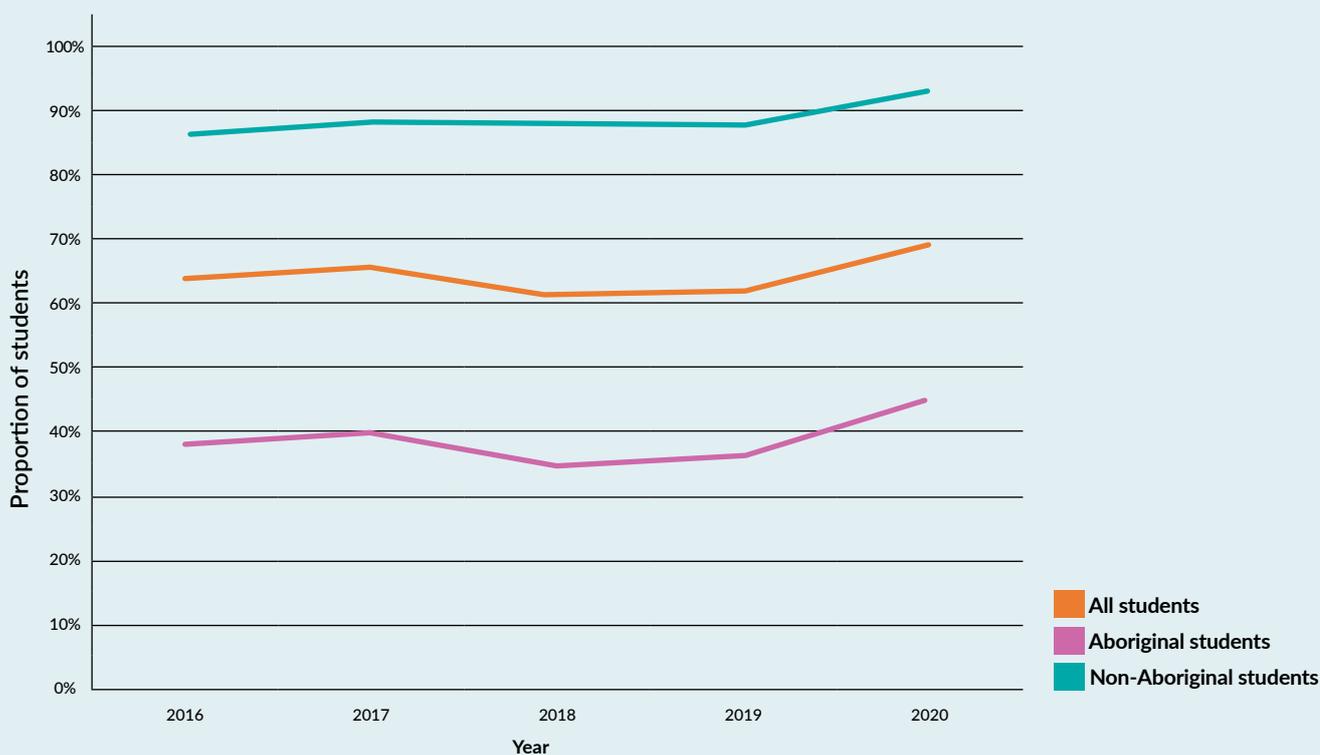
Data source and year: Australia: ABS, Schools, Australia, 2020. NT and regions: Age Grade Census data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. NT and regions data include NT Government and Catholic schools only. 2. NT data is an underestimate due to interstate movement of NT students between Years 7 and 12 to complete school. Similarly results for regions may under or overestimate apparent retention as a result of movement of students between regions. This is most common with students from remote areas to Greater Darwin and to Alice Springs to complete school.

The apparent retention of students from Year 7 to Year 12 in the Northern Territory has increased since the 2019 Story, from about 5 in 10 students (52.5%) in 2018 to almost 7 in 10 students (69.2%) in 2020. The Northern Territory remains more than 10% lower than the rate for Australia (83.6%). The rate was highest in Greater Darwin (96.0%) and lowest in Barkly (9.2%).



Apparent retention from Year 7 to Year 12, by Aboriginal status, Northern Territory, 2016 to 2020 (the year attending Year 12)



Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All students	63.9%	65.5%	61.4%	61.6%	69.2%
Aboriginal students	38.1%	39.7%	34.8%	36.7%	45.0%
Non-Aboriginal students	86.1%	88.1%	87.7%	87.6%	92.9%

Data source and year: Age Grade Census data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2016 - 2020.

Across the five years of available data, from 2016 to 2020, there is suggestion of improvement in apparent retention from Year 7 to Year 12 for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, however there are insufficient data points to demonstrate clear statistical evidence of this change. Notably, the apparent retention from Year 7 to Year 12 among non-Aboriginal students has been consistently more than two times higher than for Aboriginal students.

4.5 School progress

The amount of education a young person completes influences their future job opportunities, income and pathways to further higher education. Higher levels of school completion and achievement are strongly associated with higher rates of full-time employment, higher income and better social outcomes later in life.^(104, 105)

4.5.1 Literacy and numeracy skills

Basic skills in reading and writing (literacy) and numeracy are important foundations for children and young people to progress through formal education as well as post-school life.

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a nationwide annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The test assesses skills considered essential to progress through school in the domains of reading and writing, language conventions and numeracy. The national minimum standard for each domain refers to a level below which children will be unlikely to progress at school without additional support.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ Due to the disruptions to education caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, NAPLAN assessments were not completed in 2020.

This measure is the proportion of students in Year 3 who reached the minimum national standard in literacy and numeracy, out of all students assessed with NAPLAN in Northern Territory Government and Catholic schools.

Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in literacy 



Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in numeracy 



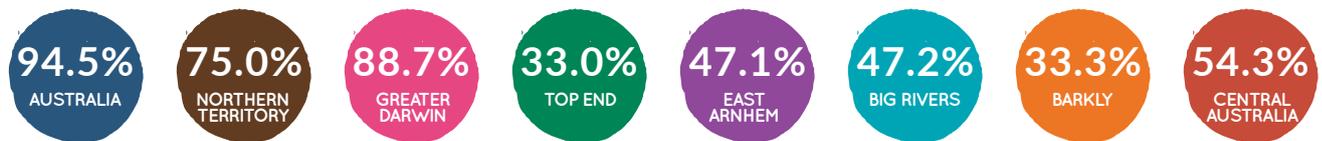
Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2019. NT and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2019.

Note: NT and regions data include NT Government and Catholic schools only.

Across Australia, about 1 in 20 children in Year 3 need support with literacy and numeracy, while in the Northern Territory this proportion is about 3 in 10 children. There is considerable variation across the Northern Territory regions with about half of all children in Top End, East Arnhem and Barkly who would benefit from additional support in formal learning.

This measure is the proportion of students in Year 7 who reached the minimum national standard in literacy and numeracy, out of all students assessed with NAPLAN in Northern Territory Government and Catholic schools.

Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in literacy 



Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in numeracy 



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2019. NT and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2019.

Note: NT and regions data include NT Government and Catholic schools only.

Among children in Year 7, the proportion of children who would benefit from support in formal learning is about 1 in 20 across Australia, while in the Northern Territory around 5 in 20 children. Again, there is considerable variation across the Northern Territory regions, with about two thirds of children in Top End and Barkly who would benefit from additional support for literacy and more than two thirds in Top End who would benefit from support in numeracy.

4.5.2 Year 12 or equivalent completion

Year 12 or equivalent completion is a measure of educational attainment used widely across Australia. An equivalent qualification to Year 12 is a Certificate III or higher. Completion of Year 12 or equivalent is an important milestone for young people and provides a strong foundation from which to enter the workforce or pursue higher education.

This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 20-24, who have attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 20-24, who have attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification 



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In 2016, across Australia about 3 in 4 young adults (73.7%), aged 20-24, had completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, compared with 1 in 2 Northern Territory young adults (49.3%) of the same age. Throughout the Northern Territory there is considerable variation, with 1 in 4 young adults in Top End (25.1%) and Barkly (24.8%) having completed Year 12 or equivalent, and about 6 in 10 young adults (61.7%) in Greater Darwin.

4.5.3 Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training completion

The Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) is the final school qualification for students in the Northern Territory. It is received once students have completed all secondary school requirements. The NTCET can also be obtained through Vocational Education and Training (VET) and in-school subjects.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾

The majority of students who complete secondary schooling in the Northern Territory go through the NTCET process, however there are some students who finish school in the Northern Territory but receive a different qualification (such as the Victorian Certificate of Education offered at Haileybury Rendall School). There are also Northern Territory young people who complete their schooling interstate (such as at boarding school) who are not included in this measure.

This measure is the proportion of students who completed the NTCET, out of all Year 12 students who attempted NTCET.

Proportion (%) of enrolled students who completed NTCET 



Data source and year: NT Department of Education (special table), 2020.

Note: 1. (na) not applicable. 2. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 3. NT and regions data include NT Government and Catholic schools only.

In 2020, a total of 1,343 students completed the NTCET, of whom 252 identified as Aboriginal students. There was a high rate of completion across all regions, with more than 9 in 10 young people (97.5%) completing NTCET among those who intended to complete the NTCET.

4.6 Vocational education and training

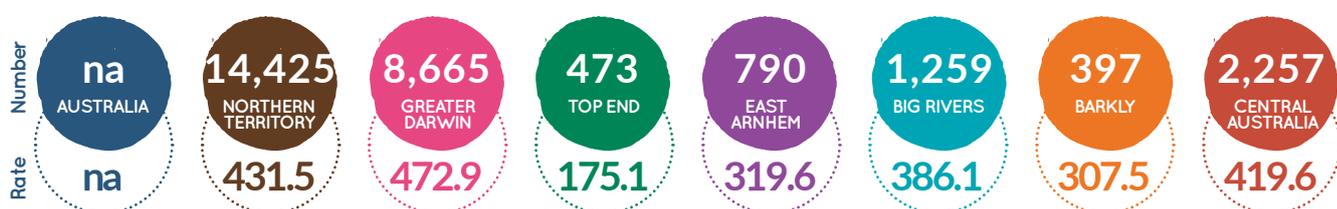
4.6.1 Vocational education and training participation

Vocational education and training (VET) aims to prepare students for employment in a particular field, from hospitality and hairdressing to trades such as plumbing and carpentry. Students can incorporate VET studies in their high school years, or they may commence VET courses following high school.

This measure reports young people, aged 15-24, who participated in both government subsidised and fee for service VET enrolments in 2019, regardless of the year they commenced. It includes school students engaged in VET, whether as part of their school curriculum or not. All levels of training are included, which includes training below the Certificate I level (statements of attainment for courses with no level, skill sets and units of competence), i.e. someone who is doing the basic first aid course, as well as refresher training, where a student has already participated in the training but due to industry requirements has to re-sit the training annually/biennially.

This measure is the number and rate (per 1,000 population) of young people, aged 15-24, who participate in vocational education and training.

Number and rate (per 1,000 population) of young people, aged 15-24, who participate in vocational education and training  



Data source and year: NCVET Total VET Activity prepared by NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (special table), 2019.
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 584 students with unknown address.

In 2019, there were 14,425 young people in the Northern Territory, aged 15-24, enrolled in VET courses, a rate of 431.5 per 1,000 young people. The rate varied across the regions from 175.1 VET students per 1,000 young people in Top End to 472.9 VET students per 1,000 young people in Greater Darwin.





BUILDING A BRIDGE TO TERTIARY EDUCATION

Since 2018, the Wuyagiba Regional Study Hub, located between Ngukurr and Numbulwar, has offered university preparation courses for local Aboriginal students. It is a partnership between the Macquarie University in Sydney and South-East Arnhem Land communities and is funded by the Commonwealth Government's Regional University Centre program.

The course offered by the Study Hub combines traditional knowledge and academic skills. Kevin Guyurruyurru Rogers, Cultural Professor, Chairman of the Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation and Warndarrang Traditional Owner of Wuyagiba outstation said, "It's both ways education we provide here. Learning about our cultural heritage and the academic side. We teach the cultural side – education about country, bush medicine, bush tucker, culture. The Macquarie University teach the academic side." Macquarie University preparatory units taught at the Study Hub include computing, time management, budgeting and essay writing. Local units include South-East Arnhem Land Caring for Country and Culture and an Indigenous Science unit, both having been accredited through Macquarie.

"We build up their knowledge. We have local staff who work with them to develop their academic level to be able to go to university. We want to make an opportunity for them to be university qualified," Kevin says.

Students attend the Study Hub for two 10-week semesters in the year. In 2020, 12 students successfully completed the university preparation course. Seven previous graduates from the Study Hub are now based full-time at Macquarie University studying a variety of degrees including education, Indigenous studies, performing arts, child care, business and environmental management. Walanga Muru, the Aboriginal student support unit at Macquarie University supports the students while away from home.

A key element to the Study Hub's success is the strength of the partnership between Senior Traditional Owners and the University, and how together they have worked to navigate the many challenges. Kevin also describes the success as "the students themselves, their attendance and the effort they put into their study."

Photo: An outside class at the Wuyagiba Study Hub with teacher Kevin Guyurruyurru Rogers





Domain 5

Participating

It is important for the wellbeing of children and young people that they actively participate with their peers and within the community. Participation can take many forms – it can include children and young people being involved in sport, recreational or social activities, or volunteering with community groups. A key element of participation is children and young people being listened to and supported to have a say on issues affecting their lives and their community.

Measures in this domain focus on young people, aged 15 and above, as there is a lack of reliable information for participation among younger age groups other than formal education.

In this domain, the two outcomes of participation in employment or learning and participation in the community, are explored through five indicators, one data focus and five case studies:



Most measures in this domain use census data. As the latest census was in 2016, the data in these measures has not changed since the 2019 Story (except for some minor adjustments for changed regional boundaries). There is updated data for the proportion of young people enrolled to vote, which indicates a small decrease across the Northern Territory. Most regions have seen a decrease in the proportion of young people enrolled to vote.

Data is collected on Northern Territory young people who complete vocational education and training. While not suitable for a measure, a data focus in this chapter looks at employment following training using survey results.

Data across three data points have been included for two key indicators – young people earning or learning, and youth unemployment. The proportion of young people engaged in school, work or further education and/or training has increased in the Northern Territory, and across all regions. The proportion of young people who are unemployed has also increased across the Northern Territory, most notably in Top End. Further interpretation is given within the chapter.

5.1 Participation in employment or education

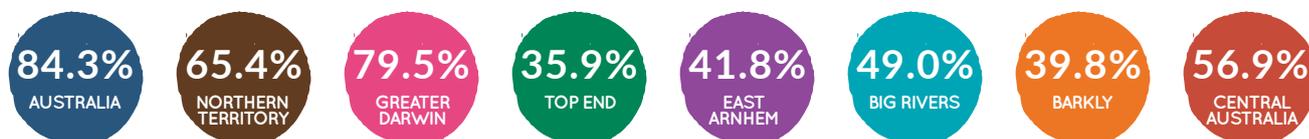
Being engaged in employment or education is a key way young people participate in society. In the Northern Territory it is compulsory for children aged 6 to 17 to attend school. Once a young person has completed Year 10, if they are not at school they must be participating in another form of approved education or training, such as an apprenticeship, or in paid employment.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

5.1.1 Young people earning or learning

Engaging in school, higher education, training or paid employment assists young people to gain skills and transition to adulthood. The ability for young people to engage in 'earning or learning' is affected by a range of individual and community level factors. For example, in a remote area or small community there may not be training facilities or job opportunities available to young people.

This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who are engaged in either school, work or further education and training.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who are engaged in school, work or further education and/or training  



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In 2016, there were more young people engaged in 'earning or learning' on average in Australia, than in the Northern Territory. There was substantial variation in engagement across the Northern Territory, from almost 8 in 10 young people (79.5%) in Greater Darwin to under 4 in 10 young people in Top End (35.9%) and Barkly (39.8%).





FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

In Central Australia, an initiative to provide young people with opportunities for employment and skill development is resulting in young people having ongoing employment. Meeting the Youth Gap (MTYG) is a collaboration between the Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service, MacDonnell Regional Council and Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation. Since its inception in June 2019, MTYG has employed 80 participants (47 female and 33 male) across 13 remote Aboriginal communities. Employees are aged 16-30, with 88.9% of employees aged 16-24.

Employees work with the local youth service to run programs for children including sports, games and bush trips. Employing more youth workers has led to partnering organisations increasing their capacity. Since MTYG began youth service activities have increased by 29%.

An independent evaluation conducted by Nous in 2021 reported that the flexible design of the program allows employees the flexibility to engage in a way which works for them. Employees can choose their hours and are paid for the hours they work. Most participants complete their hours on a part-time basis. As at 21 April 2021, 30 of the 80 employees had completed over 200 hours of work, with another 18 having worked between 101 and 200 hours. The evaluation reported the communities of Hermannsburg, Kintore and Willowra had the highest employee work hours.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾

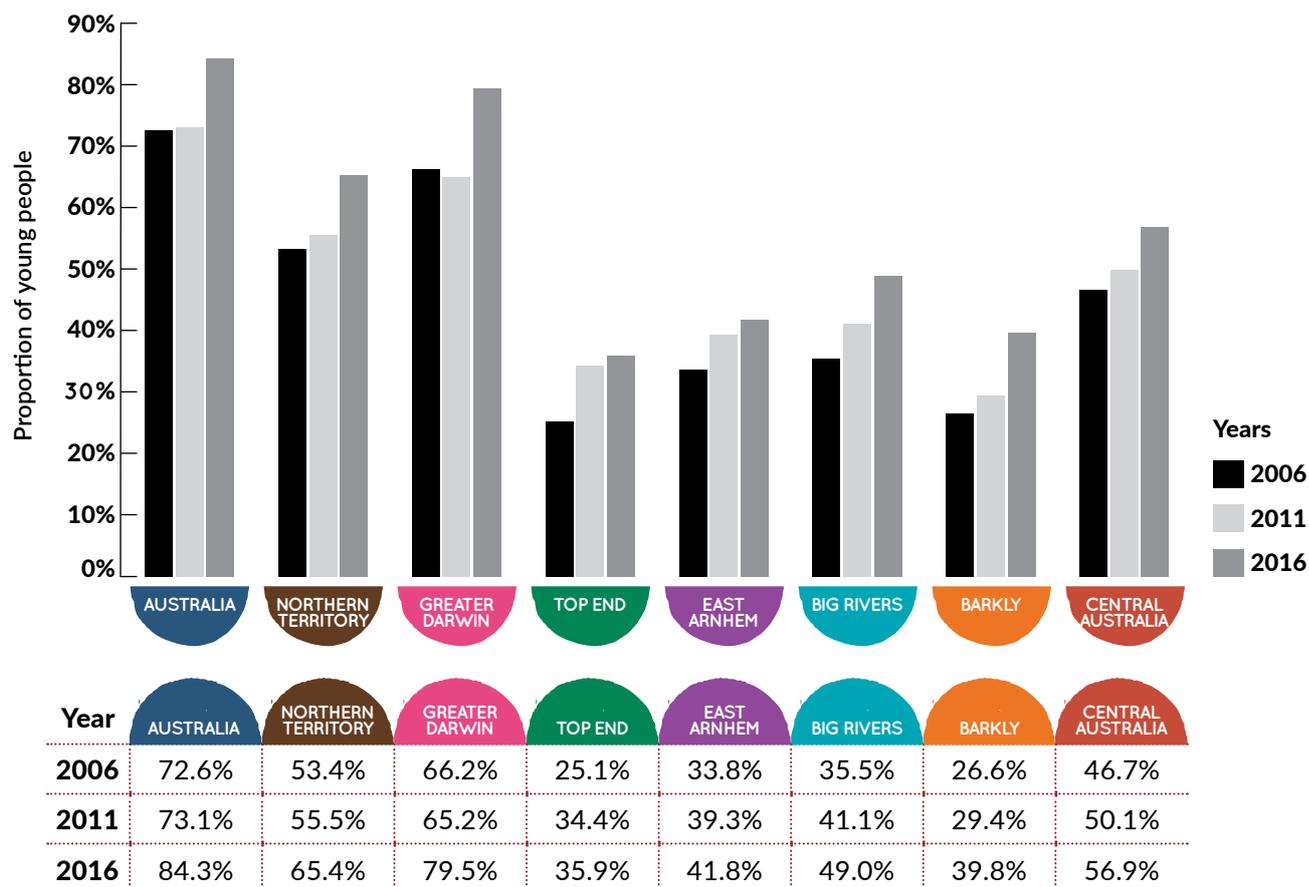
Participants have the option to formally graduate from the program by completing the core components including at least 200 hours of supervised work sessions, three review basics sessions and key education sessions on mental health, money management, alcohol and other drugs, and youth work.

The evaluation report details the success of one particular participant 'Raymond' whose consistent participation has contributed to strong improvements across all reporting domains. He said of the program, "It's good to look at my job in different ways – talking and learning new things."

MTYG has resulted in 11 young people being employed on an ongoing basis and over one-third of participants have successfully completed the core components of the program.

Photo: Galvin from Ntaria, a participant of the MTYG program

Proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who are engaged in school, work or further education and/or training; Australia, Northern Territory and regions; 2006, 2011 and 2016



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Over the three census data points from 2006 to 2016, the proportion of young people ‘earning or learning’, increased in Australia and the Northern Territory. The proportion also increased in each of the six regions. The greatest change to the proportion of young people ‘earning or learning’ was an increase from 26.6% to 39.8% in Barkly and an increase from 35.5% to 49.0% in Big Rivers.

EMPLOYMENT FOLLOWING TRAINING – DATA FOCUS

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) annual Student Outcomes Survey collects data on Northern Territory students who complete nationally recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) delivered by recognised training organisations. In 2020, the survey had 101 respondents, aged 15-24, who completed a government subsidised qualification. Respondents may not have answered every question in the survey. Due to uncertainties in sample selection it is not suitable to be reported as a measure in the Story, however, the results do provide insight into the impact of participating in vocational training.

In 2020, over 4 in 5 survey participants said they achieved the main reason for doing the training, 82.9% of young people aged 15-19 and 88.9% of young people aged 20-24. Amongst survey participants, 48.5% of young people aged 15-19 stated their main reason for undertaking training was employment related. This was higher (85.4%) for young people aged 20-24.

There was variation in those who had improved their employment status after training, 41.0% of young people aged 15-19 and 70.4% of young people aged 20-24. This means they had either gained employment after being not employed before training, been employed at a higher level after training or received a job-related benefit. Over half of young people aged 15-19 were employed after completing the training (52.8%). This proportion was higher for young people aged 20-24 (75.0%).

Data source: NCVER Australian vocational education and training statistics: Government-funded qualification completer outcomes, prepared by the NT Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (special table), 2020.

5.1.2 Unemployment among young people

Youth unemployment is particularly important, as entering the workforce is a crucial time for young people to develop skills, gain experience and build connections needed for future job opportunities. Being unemployed as a young person is shown to have negative effects on later career prospects.⁽¹¹⁰⁾

The unemployment rate measures those people who are able to work and are looking for work but not currently employed. It does not capture people who are not looking for work or are disengaged from the workforce. It also does not capture underemployment, which is when someone is employed but for less hours than they would like to be.⁽¹¹¹⁾ Underemployment is particularly common among young people due to high rates of casual or part-time work.^(112, 113)

This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who are unemployed, out of young people aged 15-24 who are able to work and are looking for work.

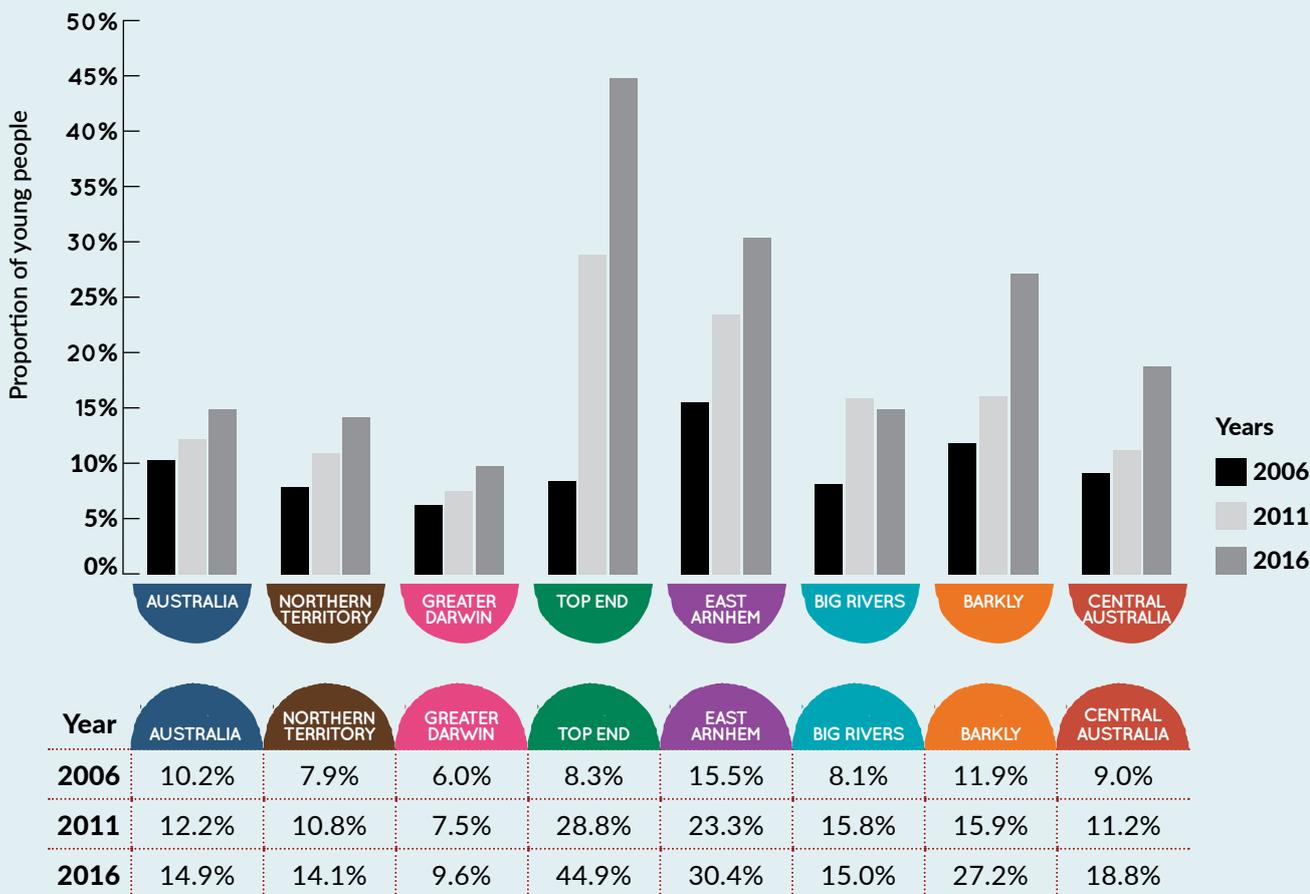
Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who are unemployed (SOF)



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The youth unemployment rate in Australia and the Northern Territory is similar at 14.9% and 14.1% respectively. The rate varies considerably across the Northern Territory, from less than 1 in 10 young people (9.6%) in Greater Darwin to more than 4 in 10 young people (44.9%) in Top End.

Proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who are unemployed; Australia, Northern Territory and regions; 2006, 2011 and 2016



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2006, 2011 and 2016.

In Australia, over the three census data points from 2006 to 2016, the recorded rate of youth unemployment increased from 10.2% to 14.9%. In the Northern Territory the rate increased from 7.9% to 14.1%. Across all regions there was a consistent increase in youth unemployment with the exception of Big Rivers, where there was a slight decrease, from 15.8% to 15.0%, between 2011 and 2016. The greatest change to youth unemployment was an increase from 8.3% to 44.9% in Top End.

5.1.3 Community Development Program participation

The Community Development Program (CDP) is an Australian Government employment program operated in remote areas. The program aims to improve job seekers' skills and improve their employability, as well as benefiting the local community.⁽¹¹⁴⁾ CDP is compulsory for many people who receive income support payments and live in remote areas of the Northern Territory. CDP activities are determined by the local service provider and vary between communities.

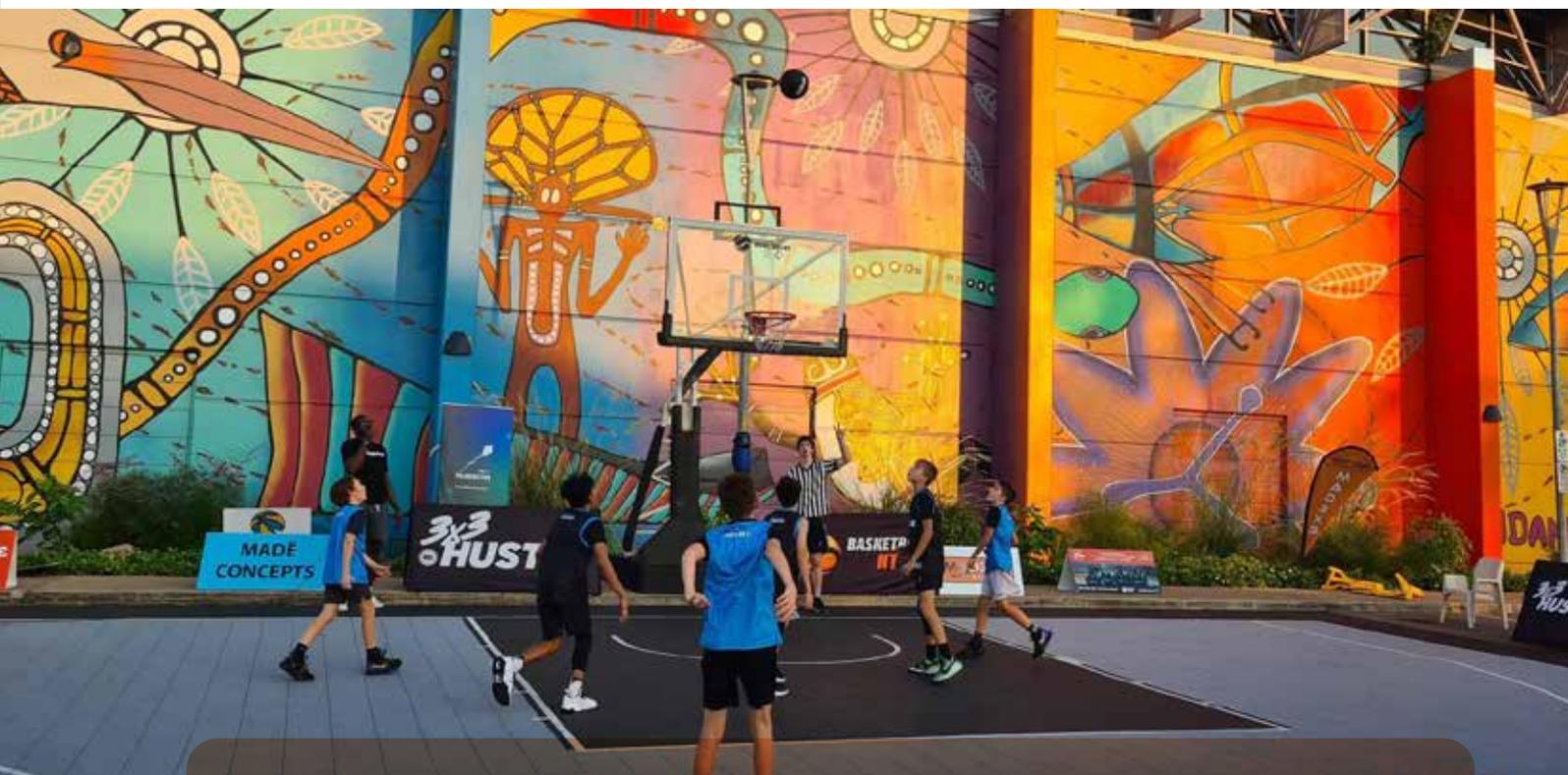
This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who are participating in the Community Development Program.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, participating in the CDP



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

There is variability in the availability of CDP across the Northern Territory regions. In 2016, there were no CDP programs in Greater Darwin. CDP participation peaked at about 1 in 14 young people (7.7%) in East Arnhem.



A SAFE PLACE TO GO – UPDATE

The Youth Drop In Sports program, delivered by Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association (PaRBA) and the City of Palmerston, has been running since 2017.

In 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown, the Youth Drop In Sports program started an outreach project to deliver hot meals and hygiene products and assist with internet access to young people. Following positive feedback, Friday Family Feeds continued to provide an opportunity for families to connect over food.

The 2021 Palmerston Youth Activity Grant Funding Evaluation Report considered the Youth Drop In Sports program. It found PaRBA have become an important part of youth engagement in Palmerston, with practice built on evidence and a strong theory of change.⁽¹¹⁸⁾

Photo: Young people playing at the Youth Drop In Sports program



ACADEMIC AND SPORTING SUCCESS

For Jaimie Bryant, aged 18 from Katherine, sport has always been a strong part of her life. “I started playing sports when I was young, Dad had me playing rugby at age 3. I played netball mainly from age 5 until I made the switch to AFL at age 14.”

Jaimie has achieved both academic and sporting success. Juggling school and a part-time job on top of her sporting commitments, she has represented Big Rivers and the Northern Territory in netball, soccer and AFL.

Since age 14, AFL has captivated Jaimie. “It wasn’t a thing in Katherine. I had gone to the Northern Territory tryouts and thought I would give it a go. Somehow I ended up making the Northern Territory team. I fell in love with it.” From there, Jaimie joined the first women’s AFL team in Katherine, called the Katherine South Crocs. “We only had four people, so we would try and sign people on the night to make a team of nine. Since then I have helped develop the team and we have more people involved.”

Jaimie’s biggest challenge was trying to develop her AFL skills while isolated from a larger AFL women’s community. “Three of us would drive to Darwin on weekends to play. I played for St Mary’s. For a while I trained with the Katherine men’s AFL team, the Big Rivers Hawks, for extra development and experience.”

After completing Year 12, Jaimie applied to study physiotherapy. She sees it as a way of being involved in professional AFL when not playing. “I am most proud of getting into university to study physiotherapy.” Looking to the future Jaimie says, “I would like to see women’s AFL at all levels become as big and important as men’s AFL.”

Photo: Jaimie with the ball when playing for the Northern Territory

5.2 Participation in the community

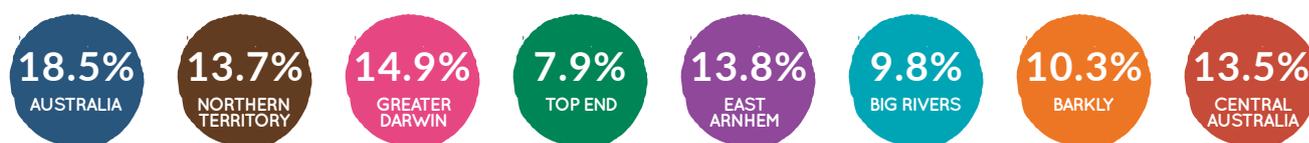
It is important for children and young people to participate in their community. Participation includes being part of community groups like religious, sporting, cultural and special interest groups, volunteering or helping others in the community and attending social events. It is important for children and young people to have opportunities to have their voice heard on important issues.

5.2.1 Young people volunteering

Volunteering is a significant aspect of building supportive communities and fostering active participation. Volunteering is commonly defined as any unpaid help, in the form of time, services or skills, given willingly to an organisation or group.^(115, 116) This can include a wide range of activities from formal volunteering of professional skills, such as with emergency services, or informal volunteering such as helping a neighbour with gardening. Volunteering has many benefits, for both the community and for young people, by providing experience, building skills and confidence, and social networking.⁽¹¹⁷⁾

This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who spent any amount of time doing voluntary work in the previous 12 months.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who spent time doing voluntary work 



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In 2016, across Australia, about 1 in 5 young people (18.5%) aged 15-24, reported undertaking voluntary work in the previous year. In the Northern Territory, the proportion was lower with about 1 in 7 young people (13.7%) having volunteered. Across the regions, there was variation from 1 in 12 young people (7.9%) in Top End, to 1 in 7 young people (14.9%) in Greater Darwin.



BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION – UPDATE

The Barkly interschool athletics program offers students an opportunity to participate in a regional competition. Despite the challenges in 2020, due to COVID-19 and travel restrictions to remote communities, the sports program continued to run with students in Tennant Creek while a virtual cricket competition was held across remote schools.

The annual Barkly Region Interschool Athletics and Swimming Carnival was held later in 2020 with nine schools attending for athletics and 12 for swimming.

The 2021 carnival was held in June and activities happened across the region to prepare students in the first half of 2021.

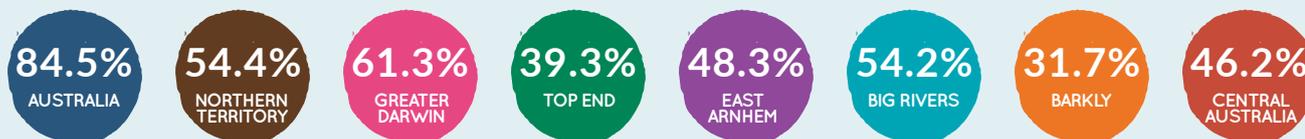
Photo: Marius from Elliott School competing at the 2021 Barkly Region Interschool Athletics and Swimming Carnival

5.2.2 Young people enrolled to vote

In Australia all citizens, aged 18 and over, are required to enrol and vote in elections, by-elections and referendums.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ Active engagement in the voting process is fundamental to Australia's democratic system and is considered an important responsibility for citizens. Voting is one way to measure young people's engagement in community issues.

This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 18-24, who are enrolled to vote.

Proportion (%) of people, aged 18-24, enrolled to vote 



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Electoral Commission, 30 June 2019. NT and regions: NT Electoral Commission, 31 March 2021. Proportions calculated using 2016 ERP based on the ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table). Note: Proportions are calculated using estimated resident populations, with no adjustment for residents not eligible to vote.

There is a substantial difference between the proportion of young adults, aged 18 to 24, enrolled to vote in Australia compared with the Northern Territory. In Australia more than 8 in 10 young adults (84.5%) are enrolled to vote, while in the Northern Territory the proportion is more than 5 in 10 young adults (54.4%). Across the regions the enrolment rate varies from about 3 in 10 young adults (31.7%) in Barkly to about 6 in 10 of young adults (61.3%) in Greater Darwin.





LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In a town where a third of the population are young, the Nhulunbuy Youth Council (the Council) was introduced to provide young people with a voice in the community. Established in 2019, young people, aged 12-18, form the Council and provide a direct link to and advocacy for the young people of Nhulunbuy.

Part of their role is to meet monthly as a group, report to the Town Board and they also meet annually with Rio Tinto leadership. Council Chair, Kiyarnie Reynolds, aged 16 says, "Being on the Council has shown me what a big impact youth can actually have on everything, everywhere."

The Council organises events to engage young people such as silent discos, pool days and school holiday activities. Kiyarnie says, "We are all really passionate about youth. We always have holiday events for youth to get involved in." The Council works to ensure events are inclusive. "We have buses in and out of Yirrkala [and Gunyajarra], so it's inclusive of the whole of Nhulunbuy, not just town kids," Kiyarnie said.

Membership of the Council is annual. Many of the members have reapplied and been selected for a second, or sometimes third year. This is Kiyarnie's second year. Members have access to a range of professional development and leadership opportunities. Kiyarnie says her experience with the Council has helped develop her skills in public speaking and cemented her desire to help young people in the future. "I really want to go into teaching to help people."

Photo: Youth Council members at an event for National Youth Week 2021



Domain 6

Positive sense of identity and culture

Having a positive sense of identity and culture is fundamental to a child or young person's wellbeing. Identity and culture are broad topics which are complex to define. Identity is generally understood to be a person's sense of self, their understanding of who they are, both individually and within their social context. Culture can be described as a shared approach and understanding of people's existence in relation to other people and their environment. Culture encompasses intangible concepts such as religion or spirituality, value systems and norms of behaviour as well as tangible or material items such as food, clothing, art and literature.⁽¹²⁰⁾

A child or young person's sense of identity and culture is dependent on their awareness of their own identity and changes as they progress through life. Identity and culture are influenced by many factors including family, country, language, religion and/or spiritual beliefs, health, feeling valued, loved and safe and participating in the community. Each of these factors both influence and are influenced by identity and culture.

In this domain, the three outcomes of connection to culture, spirituality and cultural diversity are explored through eight indicators, one data focus and five case studies:



Many of the measures in this domain are reported from the 2016 Census with no update to the data available. Data across three data points have been included for one key indicator – language spoken at home. The proportion of young people in the Northern Territory who speak only English at home decreased across three data points from 2006 to 2016, while the proportion of young people who speak Aboriginal languages at home increased. Further interpretation is given within the chapter.

In this Story there are a number of developments in the measures. The language spoken at home measure has been expanded to include the proportion of young people who speak Aboriginal languages. A data focus story also explores the most common Aboriginal languages spoken across the Northern Territory. Language and culture in schools has been included because of the important role educational settings can play in supporting children and young people’s sense of identity and culture. Aboriginal culture in the workplace has also been added with two measures of Aboriginal employment in the Northern Territory Government in recognition of the importance of having a workforce which represents the population.

6.1 Connection to culture

It is important for children and young people to be connected to and understand their culture. Culture can be understood and passed on through language, story, song, history, ritual, ceremony, celebration of particular events and participation in family and community groups.

6.1.1 Language spoken at home

The language a child or young person speaks has an important role in enabling their participation in the community and connection to their culture. The Northern Territory population is linguistically diverse and has the highest proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home of all the states and territories in Australia.⁽¹³⁾ This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who speak English or a language other than English at home, by language.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who speak English, Aboriginal languages and other languages at home 

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
English	72.3%	53.9%	69.5%	16.7%	12.5%	40.4%	35.5%	47.3%
All Aboriginal languages	0.4%	21.6%	1.2%	75.2%	77.8%	40.7%	45.6%	26.1%
Arnhem Land and Daly River Region Languages		6.5%		63.2%	14.4%	4.0%	2.0%	
Yolju Matha		4.4%		1.1%	59.2%			
Northern Desert Fringe Area Languages		1.7%				6.7%	11.2%	4.0%
Arandic		2.5%					25.1%	10.0%
Western Desert Languages		1.1%					1.1%	6.8%
Other Australian Indigenous Languages		4.7%		9.6%	4.0%	28.2%	10.1%	3.2%
Mandarin	4.3%		1.1%					
Vietnamese	1.6%							
Arabic	1.6%							
Greek		1.2%	2.1%					
Filipino			1.1%					
Indonesian			1.1%					

Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

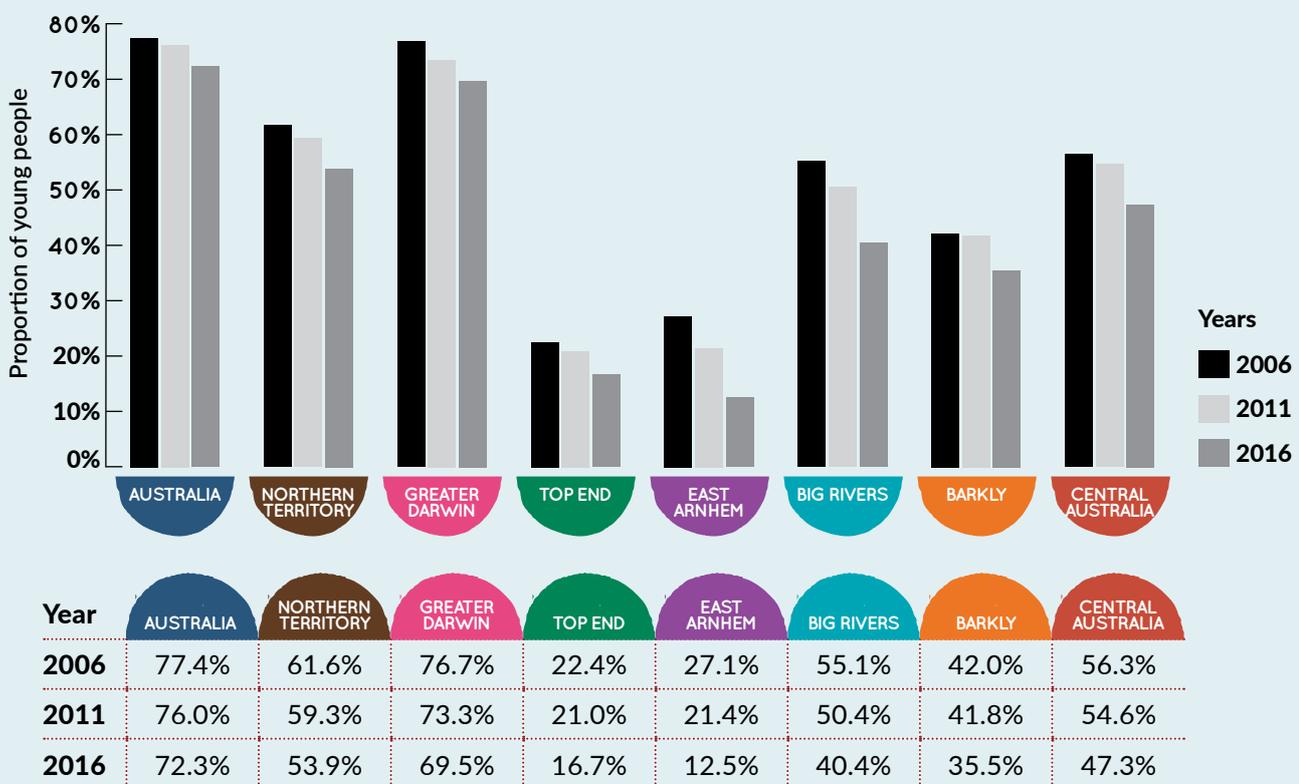
Note: 1. Languages spoken at home by less than 1% of the population are not included in this table.

2. When English is recorded it indicates only English is spoken at home.



There is a substantial difference in distribution of languages spoken at home by young people in Australia and in the Northern Territory. In Australia 7 in 10 young people (72.3%) speak only English at home, while in the Northern Territory it is about 5 in 10 young people (53.9%). An Aboriginal language is spoken at home by 1 in 250 young people (0.4%) across Australia compared with 1 in 5 young people (21.6%) in the Northern Territory. Across the regions there is great variation in the use of English and Aboriginal languages at home.

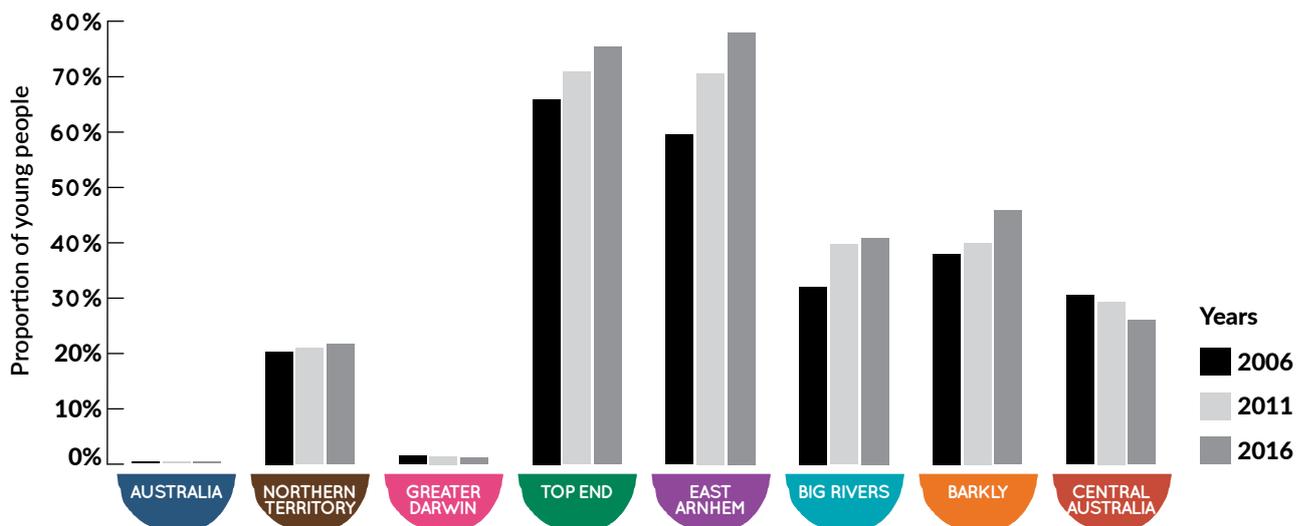
Proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who speak only English at home; Australia, Northern Territory and regions; 2006, 2011 and 2016



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Across Australia, the Northern Territory and Northern Territory regions, the proportion of young people who speak only English at home decreased across three data points from 2006 to 2016. In the Northern Territory the proportion decreased from 61.6% to 53.9%. Over the three data points the proportion of young people living in East Arnhem and speaking only English at home halved from 27.1% to 12.5%. There was also a substantial decrease in Big Rivers, from 55.1% to 40.4%.

Proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who speak an Aboriginal language at home; Australia, Northern Territory and regions; 2006, 2011 and 2016



Year	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL AUSTRALIA
2006	0.4%	20.3%	1.4%	66.0%	59.5%	32.0%	37.9%	30.5%
2011	0.4%	21.1%	1.3%	70.8%	70.5%	39.6%	39.9%	29.1%
2016	0.4%	21.6%	1.2%	75.2%	77.8%	40.7%	45.6%	26.1%

Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2006, 2011 and 2016.

Across Australia there was no change in the proportion of young people who speak Aboriginal languages at home across the three data points from 2006 to 2016. In the Northern Territory the corresponding proportion increased from 20.3% to 21.6%. There was greater change in the regions, with increases in young people who speak Aboriginal languages at home from 66.0% to 75.2% in Top End, and from 59.5% to 77.8% in East Arnhem. In Central Australia the proportion decreased from 30.5% to 26.1%.



ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES – DATA FOCUS

Over 100 different Aboriginal languages and dialects are spoken across the Northern Territory.⁽¹²⁾ Aboriginal languages are fundamental to Aboriginal identity and culture. They are an important channel through which knowledge, heritage and belonging is passed down through generations.⁽¹²¹⁾ Speaking in language has been demonstrated to improve wellbeing and health and have socioeconomic benefits for the speakers.⁽¹²²⁾

Due to data limitations and varied data collection methods there are varied estimates for the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and the number of speakers of these languages in Australia and the Northern Territory.

Census data, from 2016, shows most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages with more than 1,000 speakers were in the Northern Territory. The Aboriginal languages with the most speakers in the Northern Territory are presented in the table below.

An important way to measure if a language is strong is whether it is spoken by all age groups, including children, as this is necessary to ensure intergenerational transmission. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' Third National Indigenous Languages Survey identified 141 languages spoken across Australia, of which 12 traditional languages and two new languages were considered relatively strong. Eleven of the languages assessed as strong are spoken in the Northern Territory: Pitjantjatjara, Kriol, Yolŋu Matha, Warlpiri, Arrente, Alywarr, Murrinh-Patha, Bininj Gun-Wok, Anindilyakwa, Burarra and Mawng.⁽¹²²⁾

Number of speakers of Aboriginal languages with the most speakers in the Northern Territory

Language	Detail of where spoken in the Northern Territory	Number of speakers in Australia
Kriol	Mainly in Big Rivers	7,105
Djambarrpuyngu	A variety of Yolŋu Matha spoken in East Arnhem	4,267
Pitjantjatjara	A variety of Western Desert spoken in Central Australia	3,049
Warlpiri	In Central Australia, Big Rivers and Barkly	2,275
Murrinh Patha	In Wadeye in Top End	1,968
Kunwinjku	A variety of Bininj Kunwok spoken in West Arnhem in Top End	1,705
Alywarr	In the north-east of Central Australia	1,551
Anindilyakwa	In Groote Eylandt in East Arnhem	1,478

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016 (as reported in the AIATSIS National Indigenous Languages Report, 2019).
Note: The number of speakers recorded on the Census is for all ages. It does not distinguish children and young people.

6.1.2 Connection to Aboriginal culture

Connection to culture and country is important for Aboriginal children and young people. Aboriginal culture emphasises the collective responsibility of the community to care for children. Children are taught the value of caring for each other and country, responsibility and resilience.⁽¹²³⁾

For many Aboriginal people, culture is holistic and shapes all aspects of life. It is inherent in everything – country, language, family, diet, custom and ceremony. It shapes ways of communicating and relating to others, connection to plants and animals, who you can marry and what you can eat.

Connection to Aboriginal culture is complex and varied, often stemming from practices in the family, in ceremonies and on country which differ across nations and language groups. There is not a measure to adequately represent this connection.



Nuthanmaram djamarrkuḷiny' märrma'kurr romgurr: GROWING UP CHILDREN IN TWO WORLDS – UPDATE

The Growing Up Children research team have developed a range of resources to educate early childhood educators and others on Yolŋu ways of raising children. The Growing Up Yolŋu website has been developed to share the resources widely, with videos, stories and online talking books (pictured) which showcase the learnings about Yolŋu perspectives and priorities for child development.⁽¹²⁴⁾

The research team is now working on a new project called 'Dharaṇanamirr dhukarr guṅgayunaraw djamarrkuḷiw ga gurruṭumirriw marṅgikunharaw ḍälkunharaw gakaḷwun dhiyakun märrmaw'nha romgun: Understanding pathways to support Yolŋu children and families to achieve strong learning in two systems.' This project will run until the end of 2021 and aims to better understand how to use the knowledge gained of Yolŋu and Balanda (non-Aboriginal) ways to make sure children can be strong in both pathways.

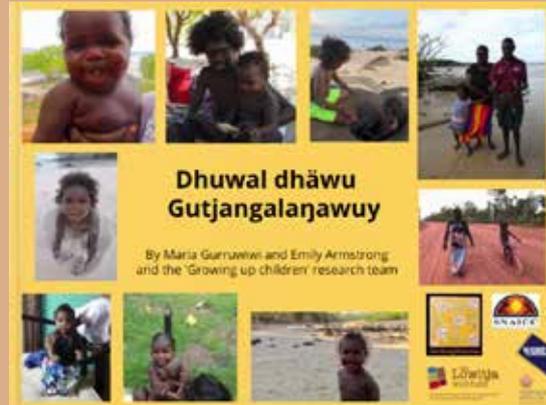


Image: 'Gutjan's Story - Dhuwal dhäwu Gutjanganawuy' talking book developed by the research team

6.1.3 Aboriginal culture in the workplace

Aboriginal people make up almost one third of the Northern Territory population, and this proportion is higher amongst children and young people (see People of the Northern Territory). When Aboriginal people are represented in the workplace, they are able to contribute to cultural awareness and influence culturally appropriate practice. This is most significant for people in frontline positions, such as teachers, health professions and police officers. To increase the proportion of Aboriginal employees, employers can work to build more inclusive and culturally safe workplaces.

The Northern Territory Government is the largest employer in the Northern Territory, with 24,619 people employed in June 2021, including permanent, temporary, contract and casual employees. This measure is the proportion of employees of the Northern Territory Government who identify as Aboriginal.

Proportion (%) of employees of the Northern Territory Government who identify as Aboriginal



Data source and year: NT Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment (special table), June 2021.

Note: 1. (na) not applicable. 2. NT data include 8 employees based outside the NT. 3. Includes permanent, temporary, contract and casual employees. 4. Data does not include Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and NT Legal Aid.

As at the last salary pay period in 2020-21, 1 in 10 employees (10.3%) of the Northern Territory Government identified as Aboriginal. Across the Northern Territory, the number of employees who identified as Aboriginal ranged from over 1 in 3 employees (36.0%) in Top End to under 1 in 10 employees (7.9%) in Greater Darwin.

6.1.4 Language and culture in schools

The inclusion of language, culture, art, literature and sport in educational settings plays an important role in supporting children and young people's connection to culture. A number of bilingual schools in the Northern Territory facilitate learning in the local Aboriginal language alongside English. There is an absence of a reliable data source to measure language and culture programs in schools.

The employment of Aboriginal people in a school provides students and staff with access to language, cultural knowledge and practices. This measure is the proportion of classroom teachers in Northern Territory Government schools who identify as Aboriginal.

Proportion of classroom teachers in Northern Territory Government schools who identify as Aboriginal



Data source and year: PIPS pay data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 24 June 2020. Note: 1. (na) not applicable. 2. (nr) not reportable due to small numbers. 3. Data exclude other teaching staff (assistant or senior teachers and teaching principals) and school council employees.

As at the last pay period in June 2020, there were 113 classroom teachers, about 1 in 20 (5.3%) working in Northern Territory Government schools who identified as Aboriginal. Across the Northern Territory regions, the proportion of classroom teachers who identified as Aboriginal varied from about 1 in 23 classroom teachers (4.3%) in Greater Darwin to about 1 in 12 classroom teachers (8.2%) in East Arnhem.





BRINGING LANGUAGE AND CULTURE INTO THE CLASSROOM

“I like working with the kids and I want to help the other teachers to bring language and culture into the school.” Tomisena Duncan, aged 21, is an Assistant Educator at Jilkminggan School, a community 140km from Katherine. Tomisena’s family is from Minyerri, Jilkminggan and Urapunga. Tomisena completed Year 12 while undertaking school-based training to work as an Assistant Educator.

Tomisena has been a leading contributor to the school’s Aboriginal Languages and Culture curriculum and works alongside the school’s Literacy Leader to organise and coordinate a Read Write Inc. Group. In 2020, Tomisena became the first Aboriginal educator to deliver the Read Write Inc. program at Jilkminggan School. She has started incorporating Kriol and traditional language into lessons and requested Read Write Inc. resources which are suitable for students with English as an additional language.

Tomisena said her favourite part about teaching was seeing “when the students are proud of their learning and they want to share it with everyone else. I like to hear the kids sharing stories with me and the other kids, I know they trust me. I like helping the kids to work with their emotions and find ways to calm their minds.”

She is currently completing her Certificate III in Education Support at the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education. “I finish studying at the end of the year and one day I would like to study to become a teacher. Studying away from home is hard so I hope I can find a way to study without having to go too far from my job and my community.”

“It is important to bring the voice of Aboriginal people back into the education of the kids. Aboriginal people know their culture and their language and are the best people to teach this in our schools. I’ve had a lot of support from my family, my teachers and my friends and I want to say thank you to them.”

Photo: Tomisena Duncan with students at Jilkminggan School

6.1.5 Organisations promoting culture

Children and young people should have the opportunity to engage in activities which promote their culture and allow them to connect with the wider community. This can include large scale multicultural community events, for example the Darwin Festival in Darwin, the Parrtjima Festival in Light in Alice Springs, the Barunga Festival or the Garma Festival in East Arnhem. Smaller community initiatives and local cultural festivals also play an important role.

A lot of cultural education occurs in the home and with family, so it is difficult to measure. The Register of Cultural Organisations gives an indication of cultural education within the community. The register records the number of not-for-profit organisations who support culture and the arts. Organisations are listed on the register when their main purpose is promotion of culture and the arts, including literature; community, visual and performing arts; music; television, video, radio and film; and arts or languages of Aboriginal people. Public art galleries, museums or libraries are not included.⁽¹²⁵⁾

This measure is the number of organisations listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations as promoting culture and the arts.

Number of registered organisations promoting culture and the arts



Data source and year: Register of Cultural Organisations – Australian Government, 5 March 2021.

Note: 1. Numbers reflect Registered Cultural Organisations (organisations that can receive tax deductible donations and which promote cultural arts and language diversity). For a full list go to: www.arts.gov.au. 2. Organisations which work across multiple regions are counted in each region and once at the Northern Territory level.

In the Northern Territory, there are 46 organisations registered as promoting culture and the arts. Across the regions the number of organisations varies from 3 organisations in Top End, 4 in East Arnhem, 18 in Central Australia and 24 in Greater Darwin.



TIME ON COUNTRY – UPDATE

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in 2020, the Yuendumu School country visit program wasn't possible. In June 2021, Yuendumu hosted a week-long country visit across three sites: New Haven, Jila Well and Nyinyirripalangu. Elders told stories about sacred sites along the Jardiwampa songline and how they came to be. Children and their families went hunting and learnt about digging for yarla (bush potato). The visits are highly valued by the community and school as an important opportunity for children and young people to see their country and learn from their elders.

Photo: Cynthia Wheeler digging for yarla (bush potato)

6.2 Spirituality

Spirituality can be a significant part of a child or young person's identity and wellbeing. The term spirituality encompasses both traditional religious beliefs or practices and a broader concept of shared and individual practices which may involve a higher being or supernatural dimension, be centred around nature and the environment, or any number of personal belief systems.

6.2.1 Connection to Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is broad and holistic and can be understood as a framework that guides all aspects of life including relationships with family, community, environment, animals, plants and the land. Central to some understandings of Aboriginal spirituality is the Dreaming, an abstract, holistic structure which encompasses spiritual and physical dimensions of Aboriginal culture in the past, present and future.⁽¹²⁶⁾ These concepts do not have direct equivalents in Western culture and are difficult to accurately portray in English.

Engaging in spiritual practices is associated with benefits to physical and mental health. Spirituality can help Aboriginal children and young people find their identity and place within their family, their community and in broader society. The learning and development in connection with the Dreaming occurs with family, elders and community, often during times of being on country.

While this is an important indicator of wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people there is no quantitative measure of spirituality for Aboriginal children and young people.

6.2.2 Connection to a faith tradition

Formal religious practices can form a large part of children and young people's socialisation and community connection. Children and young people are often influenced by their families' religious or faith practices. Being a part of a faith community can be associated with benefits to health and wellbeing.

The most common religions in the Northern Territory are Christianity (including Catholic, Anglican, Uniting, Lutheran, Baptist and Greek Orthodox denominations), Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam. An increasing number of Territorians report having no religion.⁽¹³⁾ This measure is the proportion of young people, aged 15-24, who identify with a religion.

Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, identifying with a religion



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.
Note: For the purposes of this report religion does not include secular or other spiritual beliefs.

In 2016 there were similar proportions of young people who identified with a religion in the Northern Territory (51.3%) and Australia (53.4%). Across the Northern Territory regions, the proportion of young people who identify with a religion varied from about 4 in 10 young people (43.1%) in Big Rivers to almost 8 in 10 young people (77.9%) in East Arnhem.





HEALING SMOKING CEREMONY

“My name is Nampin, short for Nambijinpa and I am a Warumungu woman. We have lots of stories. In the smoking ceremony, we have a story inside it. If you do a smoking ceremony, a child grows up to be strong and active in their blood line. Their body gets stronger. The smoking leads you to be a person who will be a strong adult.

We have two ways of smoking – one smoking is about a bad spirit. If we have family loss, we have a smoking ceremony. The other smoking is a healing one. Good healing spirit smoking happens when you are young, even when you are a baby. We have particular bush medicines we use. For the healing spirit smoking we use three healing plants, mungkarta, murlurr, mungarrija and yakkurla, a wax.

First we dig a hole, then we put in the spinifex and twigs. The yakkurla goes next, and then branches of the three bush medicine plants. We light the spinifex and then the healing ceremony takes place. We let it smoke, and then when the big smoke comes out and there are no flames, we sit on it.

As the child grows, we smoke them through the different life changes. When they sit, walk, as they become a teenager, and then as they become parents themselves. We do it anytime, because it is healing. It heals your spirit and your body. You feel it. I feel comfortable because I've been through that smoking. The spirits heal you.

That is how we grew up to be strong. For myself, I know I grew up strong to take part in my elders' information. I keep strong to pass it on to the next generation.”

Top: Nampin (Dianne Stokes) with Noreen Echo picking from the mungkarta plant

Right: Branches of the three bush medicine plants, from left to right, mungkarta, murlurr, mungarrija and yakkurla, the wax



6.3 Cultural diversity

The Northern Territory has a diverse range of cultural communities. This multiculturalism is reflected in the places people are born, their ancestry, their religion, the languages they speak and their cultural practices. The culture a child grows up in, both through their family and the cultures present in the broader community, has a strong influence on how they see the world and their identity.

6.3.1 Overseas-born

A significant proportion, 3 in 10 of the Australian population (29.8%), was born overseas.⁽¹²⁷⁾ The Northern Territory has a lower proportion with 2 in 10 people (19.8%) born overseas at the last census in 2016.⁽¹³⁾

It is important when reporting cultural diversity to not only consider the country of birth of children and young people but also the country of birth of their parents. The country of birth and culture of parents influences the environment in which children and young people are raised.

This measure is the proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, who were born overseas.

Proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 0-24, born overseas



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In the Northern Territory, 1 in 10 children and young people (10.1%) were born overseas, less than the Australian average of 13.3%. There was variation across the Northern Territory, with greater proportions of young people in Greater Darwin (14.1%) and Central Australia (9.8%) being born overseas.

This measure is the proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, who have both parents born overseas.

Proportion (%) of Australian-born children and young people, aged 0-24, who have both parents born overseas



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In Australia, the proportion of children and young people who have both parents born overseas (13.2%) is twice the proportion in the Northern Territory (6.4%). Children and young people in Greater Darwin (9.3%) and Central Australia (5.4%) were more likely to have both parents born overseas than in other regions.





UMA LULIK, THE SACRED HOUSE

“My name is Egas Alves and I am Timorese. My father is from Dili and my mother is from Bacau. I grew up in Dili and came to Australia in 1995. I have three children, the eldest was born in Timor.

In Timorese culture, the kinship and marriage system form an important basis of the social structure. The core concepts of kinship are formed through the idea of a group of people connected through blood-relations who make up a lineage or extended family. This group is identified through an ‘Uma Lulik’ or ‘Sacred House’.

Every family has an Uma Lulik. It is a physical place where clan members meet to recite their stories and for the recital of spiritual offerings. It is only used on special occasions such as ritual celebrations, marriage, birth or death ceremonies, the blessing of the harvesting season or rebuilding the Uma Lulik itself.

We keep items including betel nut, heirlooms, sacred items of the ancestors such as spear, sword, or machete, traditional cloths ‘tais’, and antiques at the Uma Lulik. We use these items for protection and strength. For example, if your children are sick you can use the betel nut, chewing it to make a paste and then rubbing it on the child’s forehead or tummy. It is used as a medicine, to protect the child in the spirit. You can also keep the betel nut from the Uma Lulik with you. We believe this kind of item from Uma Lulik will act as a protection from other bad things, giving you strength.

We believe in this tradition. My children, even though they grew up in Australia, still respect this.”

Photo: Egas with his wife Filomena and their children, from left to right, Bertinho, Decideria and Vario at the Uma Lulik at Holy Family Church in Karama



Where to from here

For our children and young people to flourish and reach their potential, there are basic human needs which must be met. While many of our children and young people are flourishing, there are too many who face substantial challenges. The data in this Story highlight both indications of positive change and areas where considerable improvement is needed.

This is the second Story, a biennial commitment by the Northern Territory Government to track progress over time across key indicators of wellbeing for children and young people. In 2023, progress will again be reviewed through both data measures and stories of positive change. Attention will once more be given to meeting identified data gaps and there will be continued effort to report relevant local indicators.



Figure 4: The process to the next Story

This Story provides an evidence-base to inform actions across the Territory to improve outcomes for our children and young people. It is a tool for all levels of government, non-government organisations and regional and community leaders to inform and guide policy, planning, decision-making and practice. Regional data, together with the data by sub-region and by Aboriginal status available on the online platform, support decision making at a local level. The Story is also a resource for the wider community by informing a shared knowledge base to support our children and young people.

We want our children and young people to be active and thriving across all six domains of wellbeing which we have interrogated in this Story. Many of the positive stories of change highlighted in these pages demonstrate the results of acting in a spirit of listening and collaboration. It is essential we work together to address the many challenges influencing the wellbeing of our children and young people. We all have a role to play in improving outcomes for our children and young people.



APPENDIX I – DATA CONSIDERATIONS

The data items presented in the Story are collated from a wide range of data sources including government agencies, the national census and surveys. Some data items are based on 'best estimates', for which there is a level of uncertainty about the accuracy of the estimate. Other data items are based on data collections which may not be complete or for which, over time, there may have been a change in definition or collection methods. For all measures we have provided notes on the data source and where appropriate we have also provided information on known limitations of the measure.

For the 2021 Story we have also included data focus areas. The data focus areas respond to a recognised need for information by providing the 'best available' or 'only available' information while acknowledging the information may not be broadly representative across the Northern Territory. The following table provides more detailed comment on data considerations or limitations of the many data items presented in the 2021 Story.

Data	Consideration
<p>General considerations</p>	<p>Data measures are not balanced across age groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures are dependent on available data sources and several chapters, particularly 'Being healthy' are dominated by measures for younger children - By contrast most measures in the 'Participating' domain report information for young people. <p>The reporting years vary between measures. As a principle the Story provides the most recent available data, which results in substantial variation between measures.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The latest ABS census was conducted in 2016, and all measures using census data are reported for that year - ABS estimated resident populations (ERP) are regularly updated and the latest data is from 2019 - Education data is collected for a school year, and consequently the school attendance and progress data are presented for the 2020 calendar year - Some government agencies have continuous collections and some measures, such as justice and child protection data, are reported for the 2020-21 financial year.
<p>Concordance change</p>	<p>There have been minor variations in Northern Territory Government regional boundaries between the 2019 Story and 2021 Story.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This change has resulted in minor changes in results based on the same data source between the 2019 Story and 2021 Story. <p>Northern Territory Government regional boundaries and the ABS geography for statistical areas are not aligned.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This difference requires redistribution of data based on ABS geography to match Northern Territory Government regional boundaries. This adjustment is particularly relevant when using population estimates when calculating measures.
<p>Population data</p>	<p>Comprehensive ABS population data including by age group, Aboriginal status and by varying geography requires a variety of ABS data sources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measures requiring population estimates utilise the latest available ABS published sources. For many measures the latest data are from 2019. Measures requiring populations by both age group and Aboriginal status for small areas utilise 2016 ABS data. - The use of varying data sources may result in variations between estimates for the same measure between the 2019 Story and 2021 Story. Most changes are minor but where calculations are based on small numbers, these changes may be more substantial.
<p>Small numbers</p>	<p>There is care required when publishing data with small counts due to the risk of confidentiality. There are many methods to address this requirement. The simplest and most widely used is data suppression. In this Story, primary suppression of data with a cell count of less than 5 and secondary suppression of any related data which could be used to calculate the number suppressed, has been applied. Suppressed data cells are marked as 'nr', not reportable.</p> <p>For data provided by the Northern Territory Department of Education, the Department's requirement of suppressing cell counts of 5 or less has been applied.</p>

Data	Consideration
Variation to data platform	<p>The data platform provides more extensive data than presented in this Story. This has a number of implications which may result in minor differences between the data presented in this Story and the data presented in the data platform.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As described above for population data, population totals in this Story may vary from total populations in the data platform which are combined from available sub-regional data. - For some measures there is missing data for Aboriginal status, location and sex (when reported). In this Story, the missing data is presented at the highest available level (Northern Territory) with a note reporting data exclusions. The data platform combines data by sub-region and Aboriginal status. This requires exclusion of records with missing location or Aboriginal status (or sex) at all levels of reporting.
Trend	<p>For the 2021 Story trend data for key indicators has been included. Trend data allows more accurate interpretation of change over time, including use of statistical assessment of the probability of real change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - When reporting a trend, there may be random variation in results between years. To avoid misinterpretation of apparent large variations in results when based on a small number of cases, we have only presented trend data when there are more than 20 events in a year. - All trends are assessed for the probability of a real change over time using the Joinpoint Trend Analysis Software. The strength of the statistical evidence for a real change is described in the text and a measure of the probability is presented as “p-value” alongside the text description. A standard threshold of 5% (expressed as $p = 0.05$) is used as evidence of change and can be interpreted as a 95% chance that the result is not random variation. Any value smaller than 0.05 is considered statistical evidence of real change. The smaller the value the greater the statistical evidence of real change. Where relevant, we also report the average annual percentage change from the Joinpoint regression model. This is a summary measure of the trend over the period under examination. It provides a single number to describe the average annual percentage changes over a period of multiple years.
Census data changes	<p>For unemployment measures, some major variations between estimates in the 2019 Story and 2021 Story is a result of change in denominator for calculations from the age group ‘15 years and over’ to the age group ‘15 to 64 years’.</p> <p>For proportion of population born overseas, there is a major change in the estimates to those provided in 2019. In the 2019 Story the data supplied for ‘born overseas’ was incorrectly extracted as ‘not born in Australia’ and included the category ‘Country of birth not stated’. For the 2021 Story, the data was resupplied, and ‘Country of birth not stated’ was separated. This previous error has resulted in major changes, for example for Barkly, the proportion of people born overseas has fallen from 17.7% to 7.9% and in Big Rivers from 21.5% to 7.7%.</p> <p>Some measures, based on the census, have been extracted using the ABS census product ‘Tablebuilder’ in which data cells containing small numbers are randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential information. These adjustments change with time, such that results for the same data cell extracted using Tablebuilder at different times may vary.</p>
AEDC data changes	<p>For the 2021 Story, the data has been requested by Aboriginal status.</p> <p>The request has resulted in changes in the aggregation of data at small areas and subsequent changes to data reported for AEDC related measures.</p>
Live data sets	<p>Many data sets used in the Story are live data sets and are subject to revision. Revisions may result, for example, from removal of duplicate records, reclassification, validation of records and addition of delayed records. Revisions may result in small differences in data extracted at different times. Extraction dates are provided as notes under the relevant data tables.</p>

APPENDIX II – IDENTIFIED DATA GAPS

There were 26 measures identified in 2019 where no data source was available. These gaps were considered in the development of this Story, with data sourced for a number of the measures. New data gaps have been identified in the development of the 2021 Story. For some measures data is available for the Northern Territory but not for regions. For other measures there is no reliable data available. This is a summary of the identified data gaps based on the table from the 2019 Story.

Measure	Method of data collection/ report elsewhere	Note
<i>Valued, loved and safe</i>		
School children reporting they are bullied	Student survey/Victoria State of the Children Report	Survey data sourced and used for a data focus in the 2021 Story, not suitable for a data measure.
Number of young people in detention	Northern Territory Government/Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework, Closing the Gap	Data included in 2021 Story.
Children and young people reporting sexual related assault/inappropriate behaviour at place of education	Survey/not reported elsewhere	No suitable data source found.
Rate of offence of acts intended to cause injury for children and young people	ABS, Recorded Crime/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
<i>Having material basics</i>		
Mobile phone use by children and young people	Survey or telecommunications provider data/not reported elsewhere	No suitable data source found.
People engaging in problem gambling behaviour	Survey/Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework	Survey data included in 2021 Story for the Northern Territory. No suitable data source found for regional data.
<i>Being healthy</i>		
Children who do not feel positive about their future	Face-to-face interviews and surveys/ARACY Report Card	No suitable data source found.
Children meeting minimum recommended consumption of fruit	ABS National Health Surveys/ARACY, The State of Victoria's Children Report	Survey data sourced and used for a data focus in the 2021 Story, not suitable for a data measure.
Children meeting minimum recommended consumption of vegetables	ABS National Health Surveys/ARACY, The State of Victoria's Children Report	Survey data sourced and used for a data focus in the 2021 Story, not suitable for a data measure.
Young people reporting mental illness	Health records/ Western Australia Child Development Atlas	Data on mental health hospitalisations included in the 2021 Story.

Identified data gap represented in the 2021 Story through a measure or data focus

Unresolved data gap

Additional data gaps identified in 2021

Measure	Method of data collection/ report elsewhere	Note
<i>Being healthy</i>		
School aged children reporting having had sex	Student survey/The State of Victoria's Children Report	No suitable data source found.
School aged children reporting having protected sex	Student survey/The State of Victoria's Children Report	No suitable data source found.
Prevalence of children with chronic conditions	Health records/Western Australia Child Development Atlas	No standard definition. Not a reliable measure.
Young people who smoke daily	ABS National Health Surveys /ARACY Report Card 2018, State of Victoria's Children Report	Data on the proportion of young people who are current smokers included in the 2021 Story.
Young people consuming alcohol at risky levels	ABS National Health Surveys /ARACY Report Card 2018, State of Victoria's Children Report	No suitable data source found.
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) rate among young people aged 15-24	Northern Territory Government/not reported elsewhere	Data on chlamydia and gonorrhoea rates included in the 2021 Story.
Children and young people who are active NDIS participants	National Disability Insurance Agency	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people with a NDIS plan which has been activated	National Disability Insurance Agency	No suitable data source found.
<i>Learning</i>		
Children who report feeling connected to their school	Student survey/The State of Murrindindi's Children 2016, The State of Great Shepparton's Children 2014	Survey data sourced and used for a data focus in the 2021 Story, not suitable for a data measure.
Access to bi-lingual education	Closing the Gap	No suitable data source found.
Education and childcare services meeting/exceeding the National Quality Standard	Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework, Closing the Gap	No suitable data source found.
Higher education commencement, attrition and completion	Closing the Gap	No suitable data source found.
VET completion rates	Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework, Closing the Gap	No suitable data source found.
<i>Participating</i>		
Children and young people who have participated in sport or recreational physical activity in past year	ABS General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Young people who have participated in social groups in past year	ABS General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people who feel able to have a say within the community on important issues all or most of the time	Survey/The State of Great Shepparton's Children 2014 and ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.

Identified data gap represented in the 2021 Story through a measure or data focus

Unresolved data gap

Additional data gaps identified in 2021

Measure	Method of data collection/ report elsewhere	Note
<i>Participating</i>		
Youth underemployment	ABS Census and Survey/not reported elsewhere	No suitable data source found.
<i>Identity and culture</i>		
Children and young people who report discrimination as being a personal concern	Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018, Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people reporting body image is an issue of personal concern	Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and feel good about identifying as LGBTQIA+	Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people who report being tolerant of society being comprised of different cultures	ABS General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Children and young people involved in at least one organised cultural activity in past year	ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	No suitable data source found.
Community acceptance of diverse cultures	ABS General Social Survey/Child Friendly Alice Community Profile 2019, Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework	No suitable data source found.
Language and culture programs in schools	Not reported elsewhere	No suitable data source found.
Percentage of Aboriginal people employed in service delivery roles	Northern Territory Government/Not reported elsewhere	No suitable data source found.

Identified data gap represented in the 2021 Story through a measure or data focus

Unresolved data gap

Additional data gaps identified in 2021



APPENDIX III – EDITORIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Peter Pangquee (Chair)

Marrathiyiel and Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara man

Community member

Evelyn Bukulatjpi

Yolŋu woman

Director, Yalu' Marnggithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation

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Research Leader Education and Training, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Craig Kelly

Regional Executive Director, Barkly region, Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Jen Lorains

Director Research and Evaluation, Children's Ground

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Yolŋu woman

Yalu' Marnggithinyaraw Indigenous Corporation

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Project Coordinator, Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet,
on secondment to Menzies School of Health Research



GLOSSARY

Aboriginal	Aboriginal people, including Torres Strait Islanders and also to mean First Nations peoples
Child/children	Usually aged 0-9, statistically and legally aged 0-17
Children and young people	Children and young people, aged 0-24
Community	Inclusive of all forms of community: local community, schools, sporting clubs, arts and music clubs, faith communities and others
Domain	An essential outcome area of wellbeing which encompasses indicators related to a central subject
Early Childhood/early years	Refers to early development years of children, aged 0-5
Indicator	A broad and measurable concept that can indicate change
Family	Inclusive of related families, caregivers, guardians, kinship carers, foster or adoptive families and any other arrangements where children are in the official care of adults
Measure	A specific and quantifiable variable which addresses an indicator
Outcome	A goal or aspiration for the wellbeing of children and young people
Youth/young people	Young people, aged 10-17
Young adults/people	Young adults, aged 18-24

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CDP	Community Development Program
CFCA	Child Friendly Community Australia
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
MSI	Multiple Strength Indicator
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
PHIDU	Public Health Information Development Unit
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
WHO	World Health Organisation

Notes on measures

na	Data not available
nr	Data not reportable (due to small numbers)

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